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## An Examination of the Experiences of Students of Color in the Honors College, BGSU

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“I don't feel like I belong here as a person in the community:”

**An Examination of the Experiences of Students of Color in the Honors  
College, BGSU**

Derwin Pritchett <sup>II</sup>

## **Abstract**

This project explores and documents the experiences of students of color within Bowling Green State University's Honors College. It utilizes quantitative data from a survey and qualitative data from a focus group to capture their experiences. Students of color represent a very small percentage of the Honors College, which the Honors College is attempting to increase over the coming years. The findings of this project are meant to be used to evaluate the current state of affairs within the Honors College with regard to the diversity and inclusivity environment it is fostering. By providing an assessment of the current state of the Honors College, it will give clear metrics by which the staff in the Honors College can measure the progress of their efforts.

## **I. Introduction**

One day I was approached by a resident adviser in Founders Hall, the dormitory for Honors College students on BGSU's campus. He wanted to speak with me about a student in his hall that was having trouble adjusting to college life. She felt isolated and was considering dropping out of the Honors College if something didn't change soon. I asked why she felt this way, and he explained to me that she was a student of color and she didn't feel she belonged in the Honors College. She had been here for a few months and hadn't met many other students of color, and she began to question her decision to enroll in the Honors College. The resident adviser asked if I had any advice on how to handle the situation, and I immediately volunteered my contact information to give to the student. I wanted to provide some modicum of support if at all possible, in the hopes of convincing her to remain in the Honors College and experience the same learning opportunities I've had over the last four years.

I never heard from that student, but she piqued my interest. I wondered "Do other Honors College students of color feel this way?" and "What can I do to alleviate this feeling and improve their experiences?" Naturally my brain ran wild with thoughts of different initiatives to put in place to address the issue, especially after speaking with Assistant Dean Kacee Ferrell-Snyder and knowing her enthusiasm. But before I could secure funding, enact measures, or form committees, I would need to know for sure that this wasn't an isolated incident.

The mission of the Honors College is to "create a community of scholars through an emphasis on personal and intellectual development and preparation for global citizenship".

As a senior at Bowling Green State University, I have spent nearly four years in the Honors College. The reason for my joining the Honors College, similar to that of many of my peers, was to be a member of a progressive thinking organization. I desired to be surrounded by likeminded individuals who prize diversity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning; all of which seem to be supported by the Honors College's mission. The critical thinking and lifelong learning are epitomized and espoused by the first two honors classes students are required to take: Introduction to Critical Thinking and Critical Thinking about Great Ideas. The one ideal that is not apparent in the curriculum is diversity. Specifically, the racial and ethnic diversity of students is underrepresented. In order to prepare a student for global citizenship, it would seem appropriate for the Honors College to cultivate an environment and student body that is ethnically and racially diverse.

Hence I developed this project, to learn about the experiences of students of color in the Honors College.

## **II. Methodology**

The methodology I employed was three-fold: I first gathered secondary research by reviewing relevant articles and publications, then collected primary data with a multiple choice survey disseminated by the Honors College staff to students of color, and finally I held a focus group with students of color in the Honors College.

The secondary research I gathered included sources from the *Journal of College and Student Development*, news articles, and data from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the secondary research was to provide background information on tangential research regarding students of color in higher education, to gain an unbiased and national perspective. Next I implemented a survey which was designed to cover the broad experiences of students of color, such as whether they've had class with faculty of color, what they believe the university's policies toward diversity should be, and the emotions they felt during their first year in the Honors College. I used the data gathered in the survey to develop questions for the focus group. The focus group questions were designed to pinpoint implications from the survey and explore more regarding those specific issues. The purpose of the three-pronged approach was to gather as much qualitative and quantitative data as possible, while getting genuine insights from students of color in the Honors College at BGSU about their experiences.

### III. Literature Review

In order to better understand the problem, I needed to know how many students of color are in the Honors College. According to data provided by the Associate Dean, only 8% of the Honors College enrollment is students of color. Compared to the Bowling Green State University student of color enrollment, 24%, the number of students of color in the Honors College is considerably lower ("Bowling Green State University College Ranking," 2016). The percentage of students of color enrollment in the Honors College is especially low considering nationwide, minorities make up 42% of all college students (U.S. Department of Education). The disparity between these numbers is vast, and it begs the question "Why?" Why are there proportionally far fewer students of color in the Honors College at BGSU than there are students of color at BGSU in general, or nationwide?

One reason could be the difference in high school education between whites and students of color, and that could be translating into post-secondary education. An article in *The Atlantic* states:

About one-quarter of high schools that serve the highest percentage of black and Hispanic students don't even offer a second year of algebra, according to the Education Department, even though two years of algebra are usually required for college-level courses in math and science. - (Quinton, 2014)

The reason for the disparity in enrollment could be a pipeline problem: students of color are not being prepared for college in the same way that white students are and, therefore, are less likely to attend college, much less join an Honors College. It is also possible that high achieving students of color are simply less likely to attend Bowling Green, in favor of a more prestigious university. The disparity could also be affected by internal factors, such as how many students of color are currently in the Honors College, and how that is perceived by prospective students of color. A study at Western Kentucky University examined African-American enrollment in their honors college. In the study, they found that many African-American students consider quitting the Honors College, or even decide not to join, because they see a lack of peer support (Rigsby, Savage, & Wellmann, 2012). A study of African-American students, published in the *Journal of*

*College Student Development*, concluded they are less likely to engage in honors programs in college due to lack of support. The study cited common reasons for not feeling supported such as: the need to prove their academic merit, feeling outnumbered in class, and having to disprove negative stereotypes to peers and instructors (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007).

The internal aspect is what we at the Honors College have the most control over, and thus this would be a strategic place to focus this study. The Honors College recognizes the lack of diversity in the student body, and has recently created a recruiter position to combat this deficiency. I had the privilege of serving on the hiring committee for this newly established position, and thus had the opportunity to understand what the Honors College's goals are by hiring a recruiter. One of the principle reasons for creating this recruiter position is to increase the diversity of the Honors College students: specifically the number of students of color. The Honors College recognizes that the lack of representation for students of color is a problem, and is attempting to increase recruiting efforts to rectify it.

Recruiting and retention are two sides of the same coin that both need to be executed in order to be successful in diversifying the Honors College. The Honors College staff is working towards recruiting, but retention requires a different approach. An obvious question to ask when attempting to retain students of color is "How?" How does the Honors College not only increase initial enrollment of students of color, but also keep them enrolled throughout their college career? In order to answer that question, we first have to understand students of color who are currently in the Honors College, and their experiences. The Honors College must hear what students of color have to say in order to put effective measures in place to retain them in the future; this is the goal of this research study.

#### **IV. The Survey**

A survey link was provided via email to a list of students the Honors College has access to. Due to the sparse data on the ethnic identifiers of students in the Honors College, the list contained some students who were not of color. Hence, the raw data from the survey contains some responses that were not necessarily targeted by this study. For full disclosure, the entire survey results are attached to this document. Given the scope of this project, I only analyze the data from students who identified as a student of color.

There are several implications that can be drawn from the data collected in this survey. Below I highlight the most significant findings:

##### **A. Survey Results**

To begin, question 9 illustrates the challenges faced by students of color during their first year in the Honors College. The graph and table show that 60% of the problems faced by students of color include emotional issues, trying to fit in, and making social connections. There are many possible causes for students of color to have these problems, and those problems cannot be gleaned from the data alone.

Analysis: The only implication that is certain from this particular data is that the Honors College could be doing more to mitigate the emotional issues, social disconnect, and trouble with fitting in that students of color are experiencing.

Question 15 addresses several statements and asks students to rate their level of agreement with each from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Regarding two of the statements, “*It is important for BGSU to have policies/efforts towards enhancing diversity and inclusion*” and “*The University should make a special effort to make students of color feel they are part of the BGSU community*”, 100% and 85% of respondents said they strongly agree.

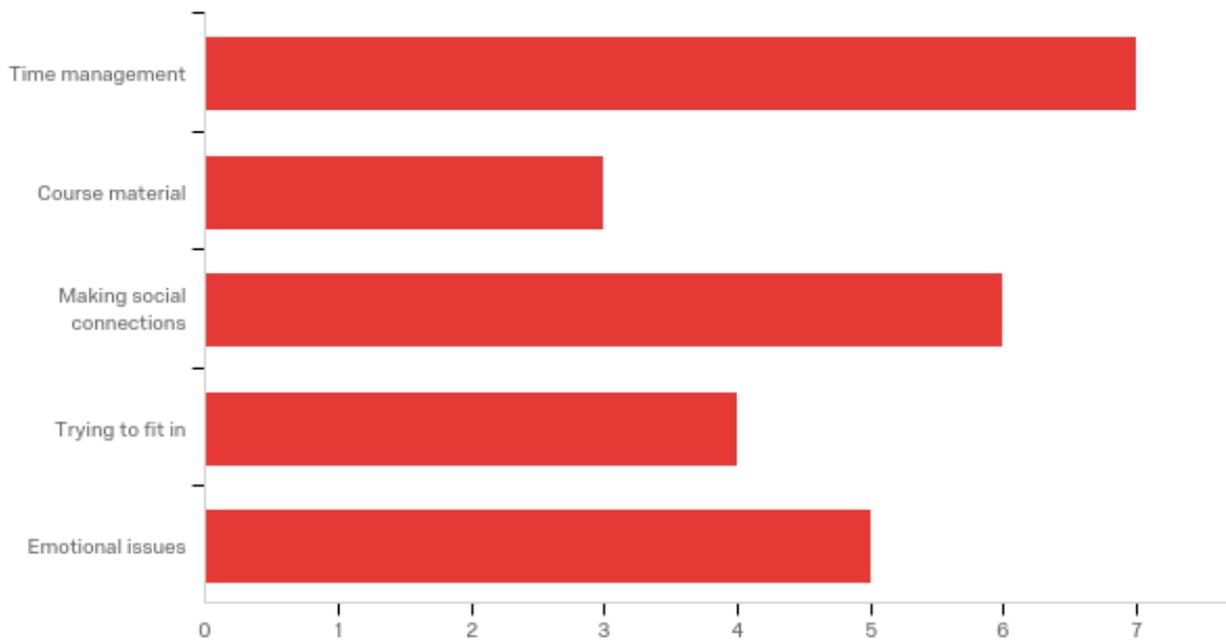
Analysis: As we will see later during the focus group analysis, it is clear that students of color value their presence on this campus, and press releases from the University would suggest that it values their presence as well. Therefore, one question could be asked of both the Honors College and the University: What concrete measures are being implemented to foster an inclusive environment for students of color?

Questions 17 through 19 draw an important contrast between students’ expectations and their experience in the Honors College. Question 17 asks students of color if they’ve ever had a class with faculty of color in the Honors College, and only 15% of respondents said “yes.” It appears that the values of students of color are not being met, as 92% of respondents said that having faculty of color in the Honors College is *somewhat important, important, or very important*.

Analysis: Positive representation of people of color is integral in establishing a more progressive and inclusive environment, and the Honors College could certainly contribute to that effort by hiring more faculty of color.

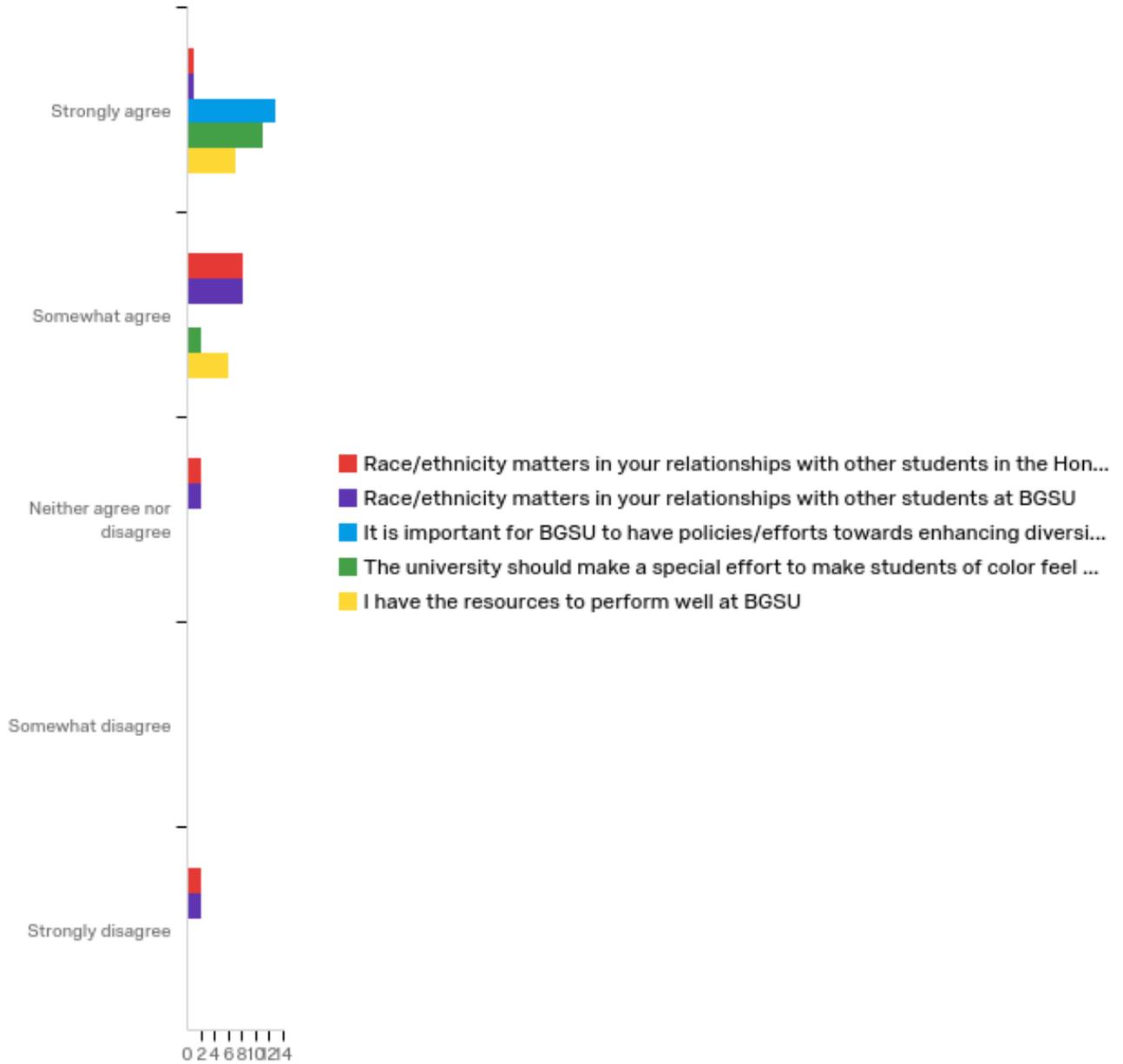
The final graph is a representation of the race/ethnicity of the respondents included in this analysis. The breakdown includes at least some representation from African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Indian Americans. Although there are only 13 respondents of color in this analysis (and 30 in the entire survey), there are fewer than 50 students of color in the Honors College total. So as a proportion of the available population the respondent rate is fairly representative.

**Q9 - What challenges did you face/are you facing in your first year? Please select all that apply**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Time management	28.00%	7
2	Course material	12.00%	3
3	Making social connections	24.00%	6
4	Trying to fit in	16.00%	4
5	Emotional issues	20.00%	5
	Total	100%	25

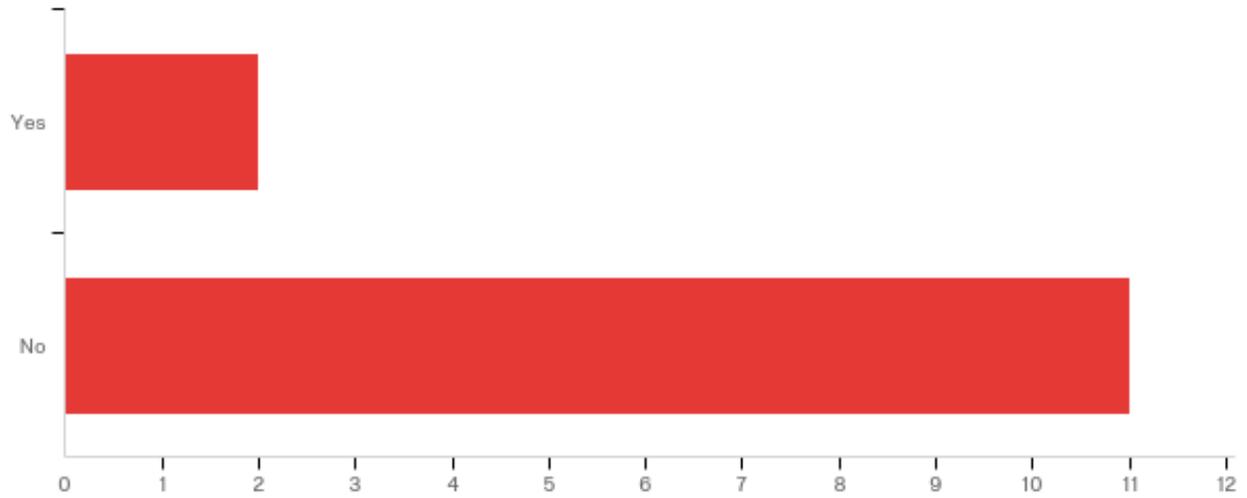
**Q15 - Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements**



#	Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	Race/ethnicity matters in your relationships with other students in the	7.69%	61.54%	15.38%	0.00%	15.38%	13

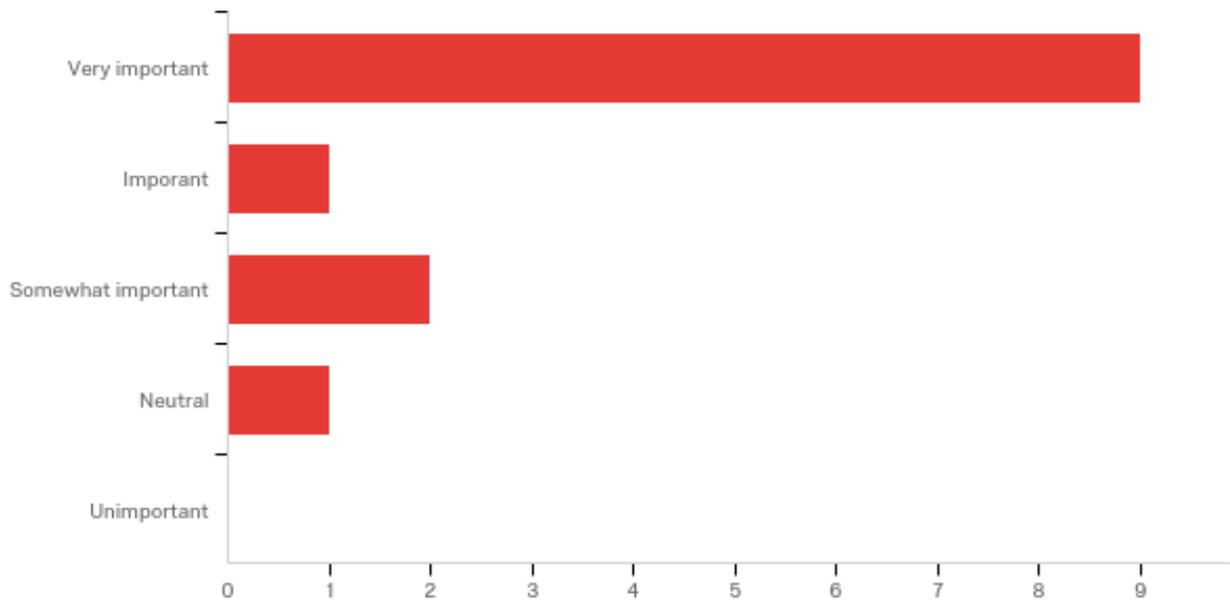
	Honors College											
2	Race/ethnicity matters in your relationships with other students at BGSU	7.69%	1	61.54%	8	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	15.38%	2	13
3	It is important for BGSU to have policies/efforts towards enhancing diversity and inclusivity	100.00%	13	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13
4	The university should make a special effort to make students of color feel they are part of the BGSU community	84.62%	11	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13
5	I have the resources to perform well at BGSU	53.85%	7	46.15%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13

**Q17 - Have you taken a class with a faculty of color in the Honors College?**



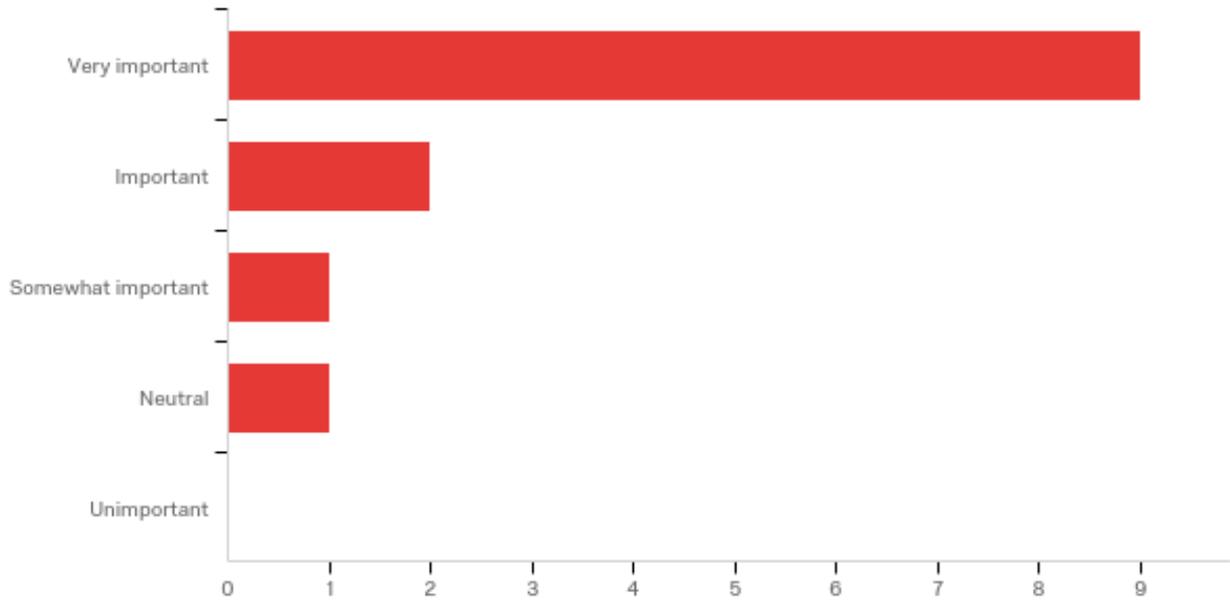
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	15.38%	2
2	No	84.62%	11
	Total	100%	13

**Q18 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color in the Honors College?**



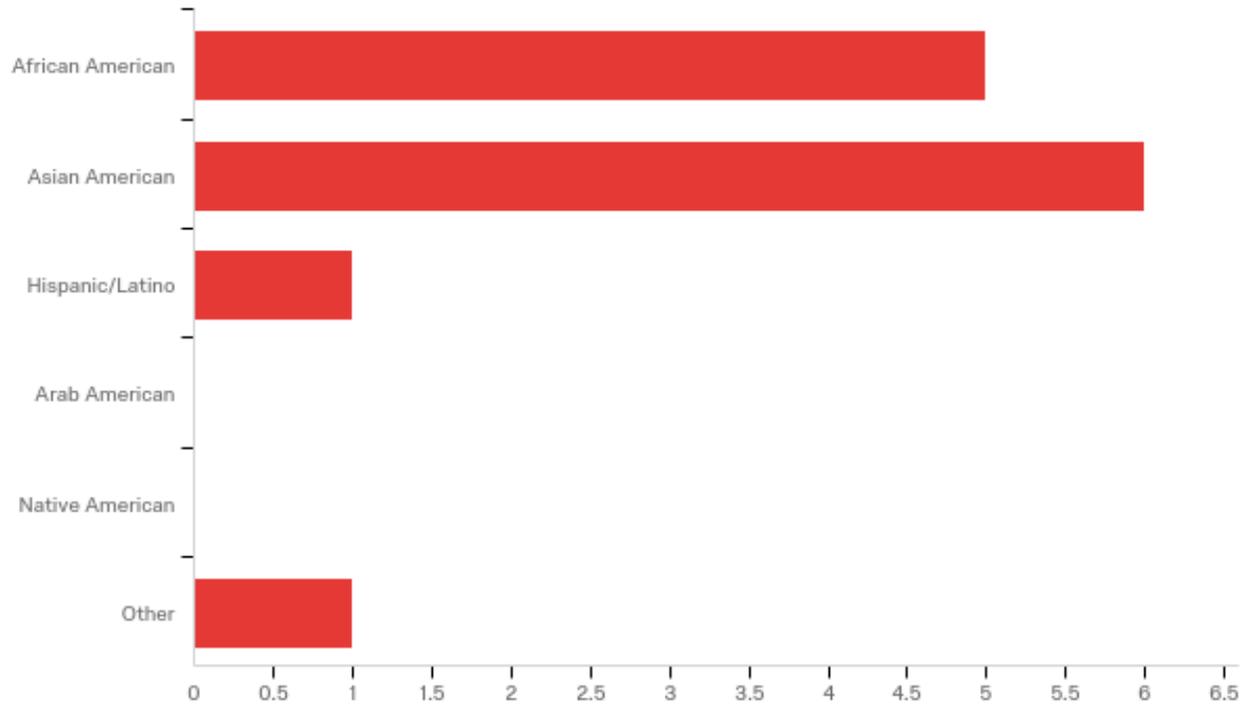
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	69.23%	9
2	Important	7.69%	1
3	Somewhat important	15.38%	2
4	Neutral	7.69%	1
5	Unimportant	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

**Q19 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color here at BGSU?**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	69.23%	9
2	Important	15.38%	2
3	Somewhat important	7.69%	1
4	Neutral	7.69%	1
5	Unimportant	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

### Q20 - What is your race/ethnicity?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	African American	38.46%	5
2	Asian American	46.15%	6
3	Hispanic/Latino	7.69%	1
4	Arab American	0.00%	0
5	Native American	0.00%	0
6	Other	7.69%	1
	Total	100%	13

## V. The Focus Group

The purpose of the focus group was to delve deeper into the possible reasons behind the data gathered from the survey, and to gather qualitative information on the experiences of students of color in the Honors College. There were 4 participants, with Honors College senior Leigh Dunewood and myself serving as moderators. The transcript of the focus group is attached to this report.

The conversation began with discovery questions to learn more about the students' experiences in general. The broad discussion was then followed by more specific questions to prompt students to provide more detailed accounts of their time in the Honors College. When asked the initial question of why the students joined the Honors College, they gave answers that were not so different from their Caucasian counterparts: "I was pushed by my pre-professional adviser" and "It was a big deal to be in Honors [in high school], so I thought I should carry that into college..." We then asked the students about the challenges they faced with adjusting to college life, and how they handled any struggles. Several students mentioned they had emotional issues and turned to their mothers for support. This an important note because the university strives to create a community for all students, not just serve as an institution of higher learning. Part of being a community means having support from those around you, and students of color don't necessarily have that which is why they turn to their parents for support instead.

Next, we asked questions developed specifically from the survey to delve deeper into the reasons behind the responses. The first question we asked was regarding the feelings of students of color about their first year in the Honors College, which many survey respondents indicated included isolation. When we asked the participants why they or other students of color might feel isolated in the Honors College, one student had this to say:

I think I feel isolated because I have those stigmas of what an honors college student would be or look like. Might be like a white-- not even a white male or female, just a white person in general, that's very studious and very smart, very stickler about everything, great student, great GPA, things like that. They might see that or have that image and they might say, "I'm not that person", they might tend to isolate themselves to fit that mold of what they think an honors college student might be or should be.

As the conversation progressed we learned more about their experiences specifically as students of color. One student mentioned that he felt if he would "...just repeat the word 'like' for like 10,000 times within one sentence, then more people would actually come up to me and talk to me..." This student's recollection represents a conflict that many students of color may face, particularly at predominately white institutions: a conflict of identity. Students want to be accepted and make social connections but have trouble doing so (as shown in the survey), and students of color in particular feel they may need to affect speech patterns and mannerisms of white students to be accepted. The perceived need for assimilation in order to be accepted is not indicative of an inclusive or diverse environment.

When asked about the experiences they've had in the classroom, one student said "People just stereotype me as being smart because of this collective stereotype of being Asian as the smartest

varies or the smartest class of people in the entire world ever.” As an Asian American he feels he is often stereotyped, hence he wants to disrupt these stereotypes and wants others to see him as an individual rather than a person of color.

He said:

I like to prove that even though I have this 4.0 GPA, I still have a life, I still go out in the weekend with my friends, I still dance, I'm artsy, I draw really well, so please see me in different lights, please just don't stereotype me as being just smart.

Additionally, other students also mentioned the need they feel to defy stereotypes in the classroom. One student stated “...I've been one of very few minorities in the class room looking around. That pushed me to be the best that I can be to disprove any stereotypes that may be floating around about a minority Honors student or a minority student in general.” An onerous pressure put on a student because not only was he one of very few of students of color in the room, but also because of the negative stigmas that are applied to students of color. Another student stated he “wanted to break free from all those stereotypes that people just put on me” with regard to the way his race is perceived by others in the classroom.

Toward the end of the conversation we asked students what they would change to make students of color feel more welcome if they were a part of the staff in the Honors College. The responses were varied and covered different aspects of the challenges they have faced since enrolling. One student said:

It'd be really helpful for Honors professors to have a meet and greet. The critical thinking and great ideas professors, because I believe that [they have a reputation of being brusque and enforce a certain level of rigor which discourages students from taking] really good classes. If there's a way for incoming students to meet those professors and have a personal connection before the class, I think that would really boost the productivity and the personal relationships of students to faculty.

Some professor's reputations force students to avoid taking classes that would otherwise improve their critical thinking skills. This student's suggestion is valuable as it could help foster better learning environments. Another student took a different approach, saying:

I would say that maybe add more members of different minority groups to the faculty staff members, people. It's not all about feasibility but sometimes it's about their perspective or the way that they convey a certain set of materials [such as] sometimes you have [in] women studies or ethnic studies. It's really important for a person of color or a person of a certain marginalized group to present their perspective because that perspective is really unique itself. Just more members of minority groups would be a great thing for students. Gain some more perspective.

### **A. Findings**

Overall, students in the focus group have at some point questioned whether they belonged in the Honors College. These students of color doubted their belonging because the lack of

representation made them question if they had made the right decision in joining the Honors College. All students agreed that increasing the enrollment of students of color would improve their sense of belonging in the Honors College. It would also build a community of students from different backgrounds and perspectives that would provide additional opportunities for critical thinking.

## **VI. Conclusions**

There are two conclusions that the data from this project presents. The first conclusion is that students of color don't necessarily feel "at home" or "supported" during their time in the Honors College. When asked in the survey whether they identified with the terms "student of color" and "minority student," all of the participants (of color) responded "yes" or "somewhat," with "yes" being the most number of responses. For students of color, there seems to be a dichotomous identity, with one being as an Honors Student and the other being a "minority." Although these two identities are not mutually exclusive, they are distinctly different and require different levels of support and consideration. One student said in the focus group:

It's just not quite the easiest being in the honors community as a minority... Sometimes I just want a support group of people to look around and see people like me in a room. I have a support group of students and faculty, but it's not the same. It's not as deep as it would be if I can connect with someone who looks like me. That's where that barrier comes in to where they can be as supportive as they can, they're great, they're awesome, but it's a different level of connection of how you can connect with someone else, another minority, which I don't have.

From this data, we can draw the conclusion that a possible step to increase diversity efforts and improve the experiences of students of color is to provide some support framework involving people who look like them.

The second conclusion: it is clear that students of color see the utility in diversifying the classroom, and the Honors College could gain a community consisting of faculty of more diverse backgrounds and by hiring more faculty of color. Students of color believe that improving the diversity of not only the student body but also the faculty in the Honors College would help to stimulate better critical thinking. The survey showed that nearly 100% of students of color think the Honors College should make an effort to both enhance diversity and inclusion, and have faculty of color within the college. During the focus group, when asked about her current honors course's lack of students of color besides herself and one other male student, and how it affects discussion, she said, "It kind of does to some extent stifle the conversation because everyone has the same opinion..." When asked about the possible benefits of hiring faculty of color in the Honors College one student said, "If nothing else, it's going to give students a broader perspective and they're going to leave more educated than I feel like they would if every faculty member had the same exact background, came from the same exact place."

In completing this project, I have gained valuable insights into the experiences of students of color in the Honors College, and I've been fortunate enough to hear their suggestions on how to improve those experiences. The conclusion I draw from the data gathered is: a combination of

ethnically specific systems of support for students of color, and the ethnic diversification of Honors College faculty, are two measures that would help combat the isolation some students experience as well as improve the experiences of students of color. Having a support system of students who resemble them helps students of color to identify and have a stronger sense of belonging. Having more faculty of color shows a positive representation of students' race and ethnicity and allows these students to forge closer and more meaningful relationships that will help them succeed. I think both of these measures can be accomplished simultaneously with the right resources devoted to each solution. In implementing the aforementioned solutions, the Honors College will not only improve the experiences of its students of color, but also increase the chances of future student of color enrollment and retention.

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## Appendix

### Focus Group Transcript

**Derwin:** All right. I've introduced myself to Walt, but for you, my name is Derwin. I'm a senior in the Honors College. I'm currently studying the experiences of students of color in the Honors College for my Honors project. I gave you an overview before we started. It's just an evaluation of your experiences in your perspective on how the Honors College operates the community, your friendships, and relationships within the Honors College to see where can the Honors College provide support for students of color and how can we build a foundation to help you move forward and support you in all your endeavors. Leigh is also studying- I don't know if you want to tell them about your project.

**Leigh:** Sure. I'm Leigh. I'm also a senior in the Honors College majoring in ethnic studies and women's gender and sexuality studies. Very similar to Derwin, I'm interested in the experiences of high achieving students of color in predominantly white learning spaces. I think it's a really cool identity to have. I'm really appreciative of your time. Hopefully, you'll feel comfortable to share whatever you're comfortable sharing with us, but if there's any questions that you don't feel good about, just say, "pass" and we'll move right along. Any questions for us before we get started? I like to check in with folks. I'm going to always be asking, "Do you have any questions? You good?" Okay.

**Derwin:** If you guys want to introduce yourselves just so we get to know a little bit more about you before we start.

**Walt:** Okay. All right. I'll go first. My name is Walt. I'm a sophomore in the Honors College. I joined the spring semester of freshman year. I'm a biology, pre-optometry major and I'm excited for the focus group.

**Leigh:** Awesome.

**Mason:** I'm Mason. I'm a sophomore, but that is my first full year in the Honors College because I joined a little bit late. I didn't know if I liked the program until I actually got in, did one semester, and then I applied for it. My major is psychology and sociology.

**Leigh:** Thanks.

**Derwin:** It's nice to meet you both. I guess I'll just jump in. The purpose of this focus group is to identify the social and academic experiences of high achieving students of color at BGSU. We're interested in learning about student's personal stories of how they enter the university and navigate for emotional and academic support as well as how they persisted at an institution that lacks representation of their racial identities. It's expected that high achieving students at BGSU have found value in some aspect of their collegiate experience. Therefore, focus groups are being conducted to identify and examine those individual experiences.

We just want to remind you that we're respecting others and their ideas. It's imperative to the success of the focus group that we do that. Don't be afraid to have conflicting ideas, but we do request that you be civil and respectful towards one another at all times, obviously. The focus group is voluntary. You're free to abstain from answering any questions or leave at any time. That's completely up to you. We also ask that you please respect the confidentiality of the focus group by not disclosing the names or identifying information of others in this room. You are however, encouraged to share the ideas generated from the focus group.

Our goal for this group is to create an open atmosphere for all to share and explain ideas. Your expected attentiveness is vital to this process. I guess I'll ask, do you guys both agree to that? It's one of the forms. I'm just reading it.

[laughter]

Our role is just basically, we're facilitators. If you want to know something about us, we're free to share it. That's only if you want to know. We won't volunteer that information just because this is about you guys. Obviously, we have our own perspectives and that'll be inculcated into the products that we're writing. We want to know more about you, so by all means, if you want to know more about us ask, but if not, we're just going to try and keep you guys **[inaudible 00:04:21]**.

What led you to enroll in the Honors College and why might students of color choose not to? Why do you think, is the answer to the question.

**Walt:** I'll answer the first part of the question, what led me to enroll in the Honors College. I was actually pushed by my pre-professional adviser, Clare Spathelf. She reached out to me and she pretty much told me that- or explained to me that it would be a good fit for me, especially with the path I'm on, the optometry school. It would look on our resume, high achieving.

The higher course work higher course load would be something that I'd be able to handle and excel in. That's what pushed me to apply to the Honors College. College students around me who were in the Honors College, they also had some factor in me applying. Part of your question was why would students of color not apply? Maybe because a typical Honors student, at least in my eyes, is not seen as a minority, maybe seen as someone who's not a minority, I guess, so that might deter a person from being in that environment where you're even more of a minority than you are in a regular classroom. That could be an idea that might not encourage application to the Honors College for minorities.

**Mason:** The reason why that I applied to the Honors program is that in my first semester, like my first year, I lived in Founders, so I was exposed to different posters and images of the Honors College. Prior to my living in Founders, I never found out about the Honors College whatsoever. When I actually lived there for like a month or two, I started to be aware that there are these activities of the HLC. They have all these activities and that was the time when I knew of the existence of the Honors College, which is right on the ground floor.

Then, I did some research on the Honors College, all the benefits that go along with the program, and if I ever decided to join, what do I get from it. I found out that that would give me a benefit

or an advantage when I apply for grad school. That's the main reason why I signed up for the Honors College.

For the question, I think the reason why there are not many minority group students in the Honors College is because of internalized inferiority. I think we, individuals from different minority groups, we are oppressed by this whole system of predominantly white men. It's not just like a day or two that you can shake off that marginalized identity of yours. It actually takes a whole life for you to actually embrace that identity and remind yourself that that identity does not prevent you from excelling in life.

I think one of the main reasons is that we do not have any visibility in terms of different promotion strategies of the Honors College. I actually viewed a few videos of the Honors College before I actually signed up. I think all that I saw was one black person. All the people who were represented in that video were predominantly white. That's about it. I was already telling myself that, "You're stepping into a zone where the ratio between privileged people and marginalized people is very disproportionate." I was really mentally preparing myself for that change if I ever sign up for the Honors College, because that would result in my daily interaction, being more exposed to white people, if I ever sign up for the Honors College.

**Leigh:** Awesome. Thank you both. Can you describe your first year in the Honors College, and how you would characterize that experience? What challenges or issues did you personally face?

**Walt:** All right. My first year in the Honors College was how I expected it to be in the sense that it let me think more than regular classes. Topics were discussed more in depth. There's more participation from students than in a regular classroom.

It was more on me to do better quality work than I would in maybe a regular class just to get a good grade. I was actually forced to think about and understand what I'm doing as opposed to just doing it just to get the grade. As far as my physical experience in the class, I would look around and I'd be maybe one of one or two minorities in the classroom.

I went in the Honors College for a year taking GSW 1120 Honors and then Honors 2010, Honors 2020. Each one of those classes, I've been one of very few minorities in the class room looking around. That pushed me to be the best that I can be to disprove any stereotypes that may be floating around about a minority Honors student or a minor student in general. My experience was just working harder than any other average class that's not an Honors class.

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Mason:** Actually right now, I have not finished a whole year of being in the Honors College yet. I think that by the end of this semester that will be like my whole full year of being in the Honors College, but throughout these two semesters that I've been in the Honors College, I've taken Honors 2010 with Dr. Brown and then Honors 2020 right now with Dr. Ing-Yann. I can say that my experience in those two classes are extremely different just because of the teachers and the way that they view minorities.

I think in Honors 2010, I got quite offended by Dr. Brown because there was this one incident. I think he was trying to make an example for other people about a certain critical thinking skill. I was raising my own opinion and then he comment on my opinion in front of other people and he was making an example. I don't know. I cannot remember the entire story, but I can remember that he was saying, "If I ever met you in the context of like Malaysia, what I assume that you would speak the same language which is English as I do."

Personally, I felt extremely offended by that act. I would not think that he was really intentional of like attacking me personally or something. I think it was a subconscious thing that he was not mindful of, but that really offended me. Later on, I dropped out of that class personally and I'm taking it in the next semester just because I could not stand him.

In Honors 2020, the professor is a little bit more inclusive, I think personally because he's from another country which is New Zealand. It's easier for him to relate to the experience of a person who's from a minority group because he's basically a foreigner, so it's easier for him to relate to people of other minority groups. I think that really impacts the way that he interacts with students.

In all those two classes, I think in Honors 2010, there was this other fellow Asian student in the class and all the other students were white. In this class that I'm in right now, Honors 2020, I'm the only minority group person and that's about it. I'm currently taking sociology 3020 honors. It's pretty much the same, the ratio between people from minority groups and people who are privileged. It's pretty much still disproportionate. It happens exactly like what I already expect it. I was not really surprised, but still. I think it's still unfair.

I definitely do think that the materials that different instructors in the Honors College can be as pretty much based on white culture or the culture that is built exclusively for white people, because I think that people from different minority groups, we grew up in totally different environments culturally. We would own different amount of cultural capital. We would know different things. Those instructors would assume that we know a certain thing, because we all go to the same institution so we would have to know it. Actually, if you are not white and you did not grow up in that certain culture, you would not be familiarized with the *Hamilton* play or different Shakespeare plays or other different literature stuff.

In Honors 2010, the professor drew many examples that were exclusively white culture, I would say. I felt a little bit excluded as a person in class. I felt that maybe if I could have grown up in a different environment where I could have been be more white as a person in terms of a culture and knowledge, maybe I would excel a bit better in that class, personally. I took on myself a little bit because of what he presented in class. That was my experience.

**Leigh:** Thank you for sharing.

**Derwin:** I mentioned beforehand that we conducted an initial survey online. In the survey we asked, "What challenges students of color faced in their first year?" It was a multiple choice question. Some of the most popular responses for the better word were making social connections, trying to fit in and emotional issues. Obviously, if you are comfortable, can you tell

us about your first year experience? And maybe if you faced any of these issues, and how may you have handled them? If not, then we're thankful for that, but if you feel comfortable sharing if you faced any of those, we'd love to hear it.

**Walt:** I personally not think I faced any of those issues for expecting social connections, or emotional things or anything of that nature.

I would say that I can always make better connections and more connections but I don't think I've had difficulty making connections. The only emotional thing I can think of is just going back again to sitting in a room being a minority, knowing that I'm a minority, looking around seeing that there are very few that's maybe one or two others in the room.

That kind of maybe emotion, to think about like, "Am I in the right place? Am I supposed to be here?" But then having the reinsurance of those people around me that recommended me to be here, there must be some reason why they pushed me to do this. I must be in the right place. Thank you.

**Mason:** Could you repeat the question please?

**Derwin:** Sure. In the survey, we conducted some of the most popular responses for the question, "What challenges did you face in your first year in the Honors College where making social connections, trying to fit in and emotional issues?" Could you tell us about a time if you have any recollection of one where you faced any of those issues and how you handled it?

**Mason:** Definitely I cannot pinpoint every single of it, but I have a few. I would say that I attended a few HLC events. They arrange from some small social activities to the day trips. The recent trip I went with others HLC students was the Chicago night trip. I could say that I felt a little bit not like isolated. I felt like I did not really belong there, because it was just too different.

Maybe I actively isolate myself from other people because I don't really see myself in that kind of crowd, because there is no visibility, there's no similarity between the appearance of me and them. I felt a little bit disconnected. Throughout that trip, I talked to a few people, but it really felt to me that if I change the way that I talk in a certain way, if I talk a little bit white, if I just repeat the word "like" for like 10,000 times within one sentence, then more people would actually come up to me and talk to me, initiate a conversation as, how my day was or what interests I have, something like that.

I felt like it was a means for me to actually connect with other people within the Honors College, because I was trying to put on this mask as a person. It's like you have a different skin color, but you're putting on a white mask. That is the only means that would help you penetrate into this white culture. That's the environment where opportunities are present and that's the only environment where opportunities are present only if you just keep that mask on yourself all the time. I sometimes feel like that.

That pretty much impacted me emotionally, because it's like living a double life sometimes. When I actually talk to my real friends who are accepting of me for who I am and from my experience as a person compared to the reaction of people who actually talk to me if I modify my

tone of voice or modify the way that I speak, it's really hard for me. I was struggling for a while and then I came to the acceptance of myself being a person from the minority group and I came to term with the experience that I've had in life and the cultural background that I grew up in. It's really like a long journey of embracing your own true identity, I think.

**Leigh:** Thank you. Thinking about your academic experiences at BG as a whole, what have been your experiences as someone who identifies as an academically focused or motivated high achieving student of color at a PWI like BG? Maybe not necessarily isolated to the Honors College, but just at the institution as a whole.

**Walt:** Like how's my experience been in classrooms only and things like that?

**Leigh:** Up to you. Classrooms, student life, any aspect of BG?

**Walt:** I think my experience personally has been fine. Hasn't have anything out of the ordinary from any other student that I can see. In any class, I may have those thoughts in my mind that I'm the minority in the classroom, there's not many of me around, I need people who look like me around, but there's been nothing. No actions from any other that have made me think or do anything differently in a classroom setting that anyone else would have to do, whether they're minority or the majority in the room.

Student life as far as staying on campus, just hanging out of the union or anything like that is pretty typical. I don't think I've had any outside different experiences than anyone else would have. I've heard of incidents from other people on campus, but me personally, I think I've been fine.

**Derwin:** I want to ask a follow-up. You mentioned earlier that being the only minority in the class, do you recognize that negative stigmas are associated with our skin color?

And that the things that we do that may be viewed negatively are often attributed to our race, so it impacts you in terms of your mind set and it motivates you to succeed? Could you tell me a little bit more about maybe a particular situation where you felt like, "I've got to do this not just for me but because I know that maybe where their minds lead if I don't perform as well I could?"

**Walt:** Yes. Going back to my Honors 2010 class with Dr. Deal, we were required to read four or six books for the course that semester. The first book we were required to read was called *Democracy in Black*. I don't have a good, a concrete recollection of it but I know it's, I guess, two different aspects of African-American history and the people who've been influential on that aspect. The idea was for the semester is you pick one book to do your presentation on and I picked that book to do my presentation on.

That was a very popular one for the class to do. I felt not only can I just read this and read about his experience but I've lived some of these experiences as well. My presentation, I felt mine had to be better than everyone else's, because not only do I have what's given to me on paper but I have was given to me in real life experience and I don't want to let someone of a different race who hasn't experienced this give a better presentation about something that I've personally lived.

That might have been a case where I felt me as a minority I have to strive and do better than anyone in the classroom. Thank you.

[silence]

**Derwin:** Do you want to--

**Mason:** Could you repeat the question?

**Derwin:** Yes. It's a broad question. Can you tell us about your experiences as an academically focused or, in other words, high achieving student of color at Legacy which is a PWI or predominantly white institution? Have you experienced things like being the only minority in the class or things of that nature? Can you tell us about those experiences?

**Mason:** Definitely all the time, of course. Since I think in a major where more white people or more like berating roll in. It's really hard to find a sense of diversity within that population of zones.

I'm really acquainted to the fact that wherever I step into a classroom, I would have to see people who just look at me and feel a little bit awkward, because I don't look like them or neither do I share the same experience or watch the same movie because I grew up in an environment where people cherish Christmas so much. I didn't have all that. It was a barrier for me to communicate with them or really connect with people.

I feel it was just me all the time, that one minority group person who always speak about oppression and racial discrimination and speak for other people from other different minority groups. It's always that one person in that class. Sometimes, I feel it's a burden but the other time I think that if I don't even speak up, then would people actually know.

I would rather speak up all the time rather than not. I do think that my presence in those classes where pretty much everyone is white is really important. That would really encourage people to think, really encourage people to embrace diversity.

I think that is really important. At the same time, my experience as a person who holds a 4.0 GPA, I would not call myself smart, intelligent or something, but I would call myself hardworking because I am hard working. This is hard sometimes because when I walk around on campus, I just feel like I'm walking with a lot of stereotypes on my back. I feel sometimes a little bit overwhelmed because when I go into classes, I'm expected to get an A. Sometimes I do not even work as hard as other people. I still get an A and then people would say, "Oh my God, you must have been given this wise knowledge since you came out the womb or something."

People just stereotype me as being smart because of this collective stereotype of being Asian as the smartest varies or the smartest class of people in the entire world ever. I really try to break free from all those stereotypes by being really involved on campus, joining a Greek organization, being the vice president, of course, of my own organization and being the ambassador of the office of multicultural affairs. I don't know. I just wanted to break free from all those stereotypes that people just put on me.

I like to prove that even though I have this 4.0 GPA, I still have a life, I still go out in the weekend with my friends, I still dance, I'm artsy, I draw really well, so please see me in different lights, please just don't stereotype me as being just smart.

**Leigh:** When asked whether they felt they belonged in the honors community, 41% of survey respondents said, "somewhat", "neutral", or "no". Do you have similar feelings? Or know anyone that feels that way? Yes. That's the first part of that.

**Walt:** I believe that I do belong in the Honors community. It's just not quite the easiest being in the honors community as a minority. I would say, "Yes, I do believe I do belong here."

**Leigh:** Why isn't it always easy?

**Walt:** Sometimes I just want a support group of people to look around and see people like me in a room. I have a support group of students in faculty, but it's not the same. It's not as deep as it would be if I can connect with someone who looks like me. That's where that barrier comes in to where they can be as supportive as they can, they're great, they're awesome, but it's a different level of connection of how you can connect with someone else, another minority which I don't have.

**Mason:** About me, I think that I belong there because of my academic performance, I feel that I'm hard-working enough, I can achieve goals, and I have this desire to learn more and more. It doesn't have to be limited to knowledge of my own major. It can be of other subjects too. I feel like I belong there because of my desire to learn things new. I think that's the only reason why that I feel belong there. Just because of that.

If you ask me if I feel like I belong there as a person or like a member of the community or not, I would say, "no" because it's just too different. I think with the way that people structure the Honors program is very or somewhat exclusive and it really targets a certain audience. It's really exclusive so I don't feel like I belong here as a person in the community, but as a learner or as a student, I do feel I belong.

**Derwin:** Can you tell us a little bit more about how the community is structured in a way that's exclusive to those ones who are students of color?

**Mason:** I would say that there's different social events, social activities, the way that they frame those activities or the way that they present those activities, it's a little bit exclusive because it's always about the same topic where it's always about the same material. It's not really inclusive to people of other minority groups. That's all I can think of right now, I think.

**Leigh:** The second part of that question was, if you are an administrator in the Honors College, how would you make yourself or the people you know feel more welcome in the Honors community?

**Walt:** I guess in my case, I'll just be more to advertise Honors community and maybe clubs or organizations that are minority-based to get the word out there and encourage application to the Honors College. I would say everyone you encouraged to apply was not going to apply, but just

getting the word out there and spreading it to those minority groups of people on campus and targeting those people and bringing them in.

It wouldn't-- I want to say level the playing field, but it would bring in more minority faces to look at people who connect to be support group along with that I feel like the more people that are in there as a minority, the more they will connect and feel more welcome and be at ease with their endeavors in the Honors college.

**Mason:** I definitely agree with that. I do think that promotion is one of the key things that we should do just to bring in more students who are from different cultural backgrounds or from different minority groups.

I think another thing would be giving a scholarship exclusively for students of color or students from different minority groups would be a great thing to do. I think that's a great thing to promote equity because we all have equal chances to apply for the Honors College, but we do not get an equitable amount of resources. The gate is very equal, but in the long run, it's not. I think scholarship for students of color would be a great thing to spread the word, then bring in more students.

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Derwin:** All right. Do you believe that having an Honors class with faculty of color is important? Why or why not?

**Walt:** Yes. I do believe that it's important. I personally have another experience, but I believe it would be important to have

because that's a different level of looking around and seeing students as a minority is different than saying the person who's facilitating the class is being a minority because that person is- I want to say, more important than the students but the other person you should have a better relationship with so the person grading their papers, the person giving your assignments, the person facilitating the class or the person holding office or things like that.

If the person teaching or facilitating the class as a minority, I believe it would help and be important in that sense because maybe they can teach a class or maybe they can think about things different than a teacher who is not a minority would, and a be able to be more inclusive. I'm not saying that teachers who aren't minorities are inclusive but there should be something that I might think about that would be exclusive of that minority would think about more before saying in a sense because they're experiencing those minority-- their experience those minority experiences firsthand, I should say.

[door opens]

**Tai:** Hello.

**Leigh:** Hey!

**Tai:** I've been sitting in there for the last hour. No one told me it wasn't in there. I just thought we were watching video for it.

**Leigh:** Oh I'm so sorry!

**Derwin:** I wish I would've known, I would've said something.

**Linda:** No, you're fine.

**Leigh:** No, I'm so sorry!

**Linda:** [laughing] I just feel bad.

**Leigh:** The purpose of our focus group is to identify the social and academic experiences of high achieving students of color at BG. Derwin and I are interested in learning students personal stories of how they entered the university and navigate for emotional and academic support as well as how they have persisted at an institution that lacks representation of their racial identities. It is expected that high achieving students at BG has found value in some aspect of their college experience. Therefore, focus groups are being conducted to identify and examine those individual experiences. Any questions so far? We went over some ground rules. We would like to remind everyone that respecting others and their ideas is imperative to the success of this focus group.

Don't be afraid of conflicting ideas, but we request your civility and respect towards one another at all times. This focus group is completely voluntary. You're free to abstain from answering any question for any reason at any time and you can leave whenever. Don't feel obligated to stay here because we know you're busy. Where is my place? Yes. We also ask that you please respect the confidentiality of this focus group by not disclosing any names or identifying information. You are, however, encouraged to share the ideas generated from the focus group. Our goals for this phase is to create an open atmosphere for all to share and explain ideas and your respect and attentiveness is vital to this process. Cool with that? Awesome.

Our first question for the two of you is what has led you to enroll in the Honors College? And why might other students of color choose not to enroll in the Honors College?

**Tai:** I enrolled-- I'm a music major and that's like a very busy schedule. I was looking at the honors college but I wasn't at the same time. I ended up receiving the alumni royal scholarship program. Part of that, you have to be in the Honors College. I was forced into it even though I was on the edge. Obviously, I love it here. I think one of the things that may deter some kids is that, I think we talked about it in ambassadors, there's not that much diversity. It's mostly like white females. [giggles]. When you're looking at that and even the faculty. I don't know that many faculty members because I'm only a first year but I've seen predominantly white faculty members. That may also deter some kids as well.

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Linda:** I have a similar situation. I was on the fence of the Honors College. I wanted that community sense. I think coming from high school to college, high school Honors is very prioritized. It was a big deal to be in Honors, so I thought I should carry that into college, but then I received the award of high distinction and as a part of that, you have to be in Honors College. That sealed the deal for me.

What might deter some high achieving students of color from enrolling, I think, is the fear of not having a perfect GPA, because my parents, who also come from an Asian-American background, they are very grades-driven and grades-motivated so I am as well. I think that was a big factor that I wasn't completely sure of.

**Leigh:** Thank you both. Keep it going? Please describe your first year in the Honors College. How would you characterize your experience and what challenges or issues did you face?

**Tai:** I can answer half of that.

**Leigh:** Okay.

**Tai:** This is my first year so I love it. I love the community. One of the big reasons why I chose BG was just because it was freakishly friendly. That's why two of my top choices for college is they were both super friendly campuses. My band have to come here. Ever since the sixth grade, I was telling people I was going to BG before I even knew what college was. Let me think about the challenges I faced so I can-- If you want to answer it.

**Linda:** To be honest, I don't quite completely remember what my first year in the Honors College was like. It was blur especially since it was three years ago, but a challenge I faced is a challenge, I wasn't very involved my first year in the Honors College. I didn't live in Founders and I was not involved in any Honors organization. I was more focused on my scholarship programs and my major. I think that would be what I consider a challenge.

**Leigh:** Sure.

**Tai:** Okay, I think—I'll let you finish writing.

**Leigh:** Go ahead.

**Tai:** I think my biggest challenge this year has been- you know how when you're entering college, they're always like, "Join clubs, join clubs" and so I've done that. I think one of the hardest challenges is finding time to do things for yourself without feeling guilty about "I could be practicing my flute right now, then I'd have that etude down by my lesson or whatever." I think it's just balancing, not just academics and organizations, but just if you combine all that, which is like that versus you and seeing what you need for yourself rather than what you need to meet these requirements or whatever for other people.

**Leigh:** Thanks.

**Derwin:** In a recent survey conducted among our students of color, respondents were asked what challenges they faced during their first year. A few of the recurring responses were, making social connections, trying to fit in and emotional issues. If you're comfortable sharing time where you may have experienced those in your first year, could you tell us a little bit about that and maybe how you handled the situation?

If you didn't have that experience, don't feel obligated to make-

**Tai:** Can you repeat the question just so I have it to refresh my brain?

**Derwin:** Yes. In the survey that we conducted about our students of color, we asked them what challenges they faced during their first year. Some of their responses were emotional issues, trying to fit in and making social connections. Can you tell us about the time maybe you encountered one or more of those problems and how you handled it?

**Tai:** I think for me, it's been the emotional aspect of that question just because being away from home is a big thing. My mom at home is my rock. It's trying to balance finding that in yourself, then finding some friends or faculty members that you can confide in. Kacee Snyder, if you guys, she's like my mom away from home. If there's a problem with the teacher, she's usually the one I go to.

That's been the hardest struggle finding those people, but once you find them, I feel like that resolves itself.

It's just knowing when to go to them and when not to bother them [laughs].

**Linda:** I think also on the emotional side, my freshman year I was really trying to find myself and who I wasn't, who I wanted to become. I found myself in not the healthiest long-term relationship. My first year here, I actually broke off a two and a half- year relationship from high school because I knew that wasn't healthy for myself. That was a challenge and I dealt with it by finding a close knit group of friends here as my support system.

**Leigh:** Sorry I'm a slow writer. Cool. Thanks. Okay, so this is that question I think I worded weird earlier but, thinking about just your experiences as a student at this entire- with the institution at large, not necessarily isolated to the Honors College. What have been your experiences as someone who identifies as academically focused, or high achieving knowing that this is a PWI, predominantly white institution?

**Linda:** This is going to sound kind of weird. It's been a good experience especially because I am going towards the STEM field. Most of my class I've taken are in mathematics. My classes actually have a lot of high achieving students and students of color and there's also a lot of international students in the math classes. So I think I have a different perspective on this question, but it's been good.

**Tai:** I don't know if it has affected me. Maybe I'm just not aware of it. Does that make sense? I don't know if I'm able to answer this question to the best of my ability.

**Leigh:** That's okay. [laughs] Why do you keep looking at me like that?

**Derwin:** In the survey—Actually, let's do number four. One of the things we want to know is, you mentioned that your mom is like your rock, and Kacee is like your mom away from home. We want to a little bit more about your support system. What does it look like? Who do you have those relationships with? Where do you go when you're struggling or trying to be successful or you need some advice?

**Tai:** I think, like I said, there's a mom thing, if a professor is giving me a hard time and I just need to vent and you don't want to always go to your mom for everything, Kacee's definitely who I would go to. I think for a lot of my music-related conflict-- I'm in a marching band and if

you know marching bands they're like your family basically. They're also like cool, that's what I think. I have my marching band friends.

There's this one friend of mine who's in marching band but she's also in the flute studio. She's in align with my same classes. Us and one other chick who's also in the flute studio, we form a pad and we just complain about music, major life. Mostly people on my major and people in my suite, but that's more like general things, I guess, or other things that are-- I don't know, are more like immediate problems.

**Linda:** It depends for me on the problem. For questions that I-- I go towards an organization towards what I want to be answered. For the questions that are super deep and thoughtful, I go towards something like Honors organizations like ours scholars and like Dr. Browne and people in our scholars. If it's something more major related, then I would go towards, not even my adviser, but my program adviser. He would help me more with my major. If I had class questions that I would go towards my professors.

**Leigh:** I'm so slow. Okay. I feel like you're giving me looks. I'm lost. [unintelligible 00:55:11] What question were we on? Five? Did we ask this to Walt and Mason yet?

**Derwin:** You didn't. You skipped four.

**Leigh:** I skipped?

**Derwin:** Yes, you did.

**Leigh:** I'm just a mess. Oh my God. Okay. Did y'all want to weigh in on that one?

**Derwin:** I know Walt mentioned the faculty and the students that you build relationships with, but they're not necessarily as deep as they could be as you shared a racial identity with them. You want to go a little deeper on that?

**Walt:** Can you repeat the question? I'm sorry.

**Derwin:** Who do you go to when you are struggling, when you're successful or when you need advice? Who have you forged those relationships with since you've gotten to college and what do those relationships look like?

**Walt:** When I need any help or advice, it depends on what aspect I need help or advice with. If it's something that's related to my pre-optometry track, I might go to my professional adviser. If it's something that's specifically class-related, I might go to a professor. If it's something just general that other I know might be struggling with, I might go to those people and ask how they're handling it or they can help me handle it or anything like that so I keep my peers in the Honors College, that could be different groups, clubs or organizations that I'm in on campus. It just depends on what I'm presented with and that dictates who I go to to help get my answer to the problem.

**Mason:** Is it my turn? Okay. Can you repeat that question? That was a little bit confusing.

**Derwin:** Yes. We want to know about your support network. Who have you formed relationships with and you can go to them when maybe you're struggling or you need advice? And what do those relationships that you've made look like?

**Mason:** In terms of faculty and staff or-- ?

**Derwin:** Faculty, staff, other students, mentors, parents. It's completely up to what your situation was like.

**Mason:** Okay. I know for a fact that when I first came to campus in college of course, I think I vented a lot and I vent to my mom. I face-time her almost everyday just to vent. That was not the most ideal thing to put a person under, but yes, she was and she's still such a great support system for me as a person, emotionally.

I do find that there are many questions in terms of my major or the pathway that I'll embark on after I graduate. I tend to get a little bit anxious about how everything is going to turn out because, from a major, nothing is really set in stone and nothing is guaranteed. I do have some questions, but unfortunately, like my adviser, even the adviser in the Honors College, they cannot really answer those questions and they always try to calm me down and say it like, "Maybe you can worry about that when you're in the late junior or when you're a senior."

I think it's because my goal is a little bit higher than other people. After I get my bachelors degree, I would like to go to one of the Ivy Leagues for grad school just to build a very stable future in the long run. I'll get into a hospital or something and be a psychologist. That would be really hard to do if you are getting into some very mediocre grad schools. I'm aiming for a grad school that are high-ranking so I would like to start from now, but I think that my adviser do not really understand the situation that I'm in or my goals. Most of the time, they cannot really address my concern.

In terms of friends, I go to them a lot to just vent about classes and all the unreasonable things that professors just give me on a daily basis, really tall demand, and not knowing that I have four exams on the next day, something like that. I would always go to my friends, vent for two hours, then stay up all night, and do my paper.

**Derwin:** Thank you. So do you want to do five?

**Leigh:** Now we're on five because obviously, I can't count. Yeah. When asked whether they felt they belonged in the honors community--

[sneezes]

**Leigh:** Bless you. 41% of survey respondents said somewhat neutral or no. Do you have similar feelings? Or know anyone that feels that way? That's the first part of that question.

**Linda:** I felt that way my first year going into my second year, then I became involved with honors organizations, and that was the turning point for me. My start was honors OWGL and then it progressed to honors mediation team, then honors ambassador's, then honor scholars. The more organizations I found myself involved, the more in the community I felt like I belonged.

**Leigh:** Thanks.

**Tai:** I feel the same way. Walking in with alumni scholars, it kind of helped me to know that I was going to have some people in my corner already. Joining ambassadors helped a lot even though that was the second part of the semester, but I don't think I've ever felt like I didn't belong. I feel like Honors Colleges is just such a bad concept. I don't know. I can't think of anyone belonging in an Honors College, you know what I'm saying? I don't know. It seems odd to me, but yes.

**Leigh:** [unintelligible 01:02:14]

**Derwin:** Second part of the question.

**Leigh:** Oh, my God!

[laughter]

**Derwin:** Where are you right now?

**Leigh:** I think I need a nap.

**Derwin:** You're not here, you're somewhere else.

[laughter]

[cross talk]

**Leigh:** Oh, my God. I'm not here.

**Leigh:** Oh, my God. If you were an administrator in the Honors College, how would you make yourself or the people you know, feel more welcome in the honors community?

**Tai:** Are you talking about the HLC, is that included or is it just like the Honors College?

**Leigh:** The Honors--

**Tai:** The Honors College.

[cross talk]

**Leigh:** Yeah.

**Derwin:** I think the HLC is included in that though.

**Leigh:** Yeah.

**Tai:** Oh, it is included? Okay. I think maybe for honors, in general, if they pushed the organizations a bit more. I don't about any of you, but the honors organizations seemed a little intimidating at first, you know what I'm saying? They seemed a little bit scary.

**Leigh:** How so?

**Tai:** Well, because you have the stigma of honors already of these snooty kids and then to have an organization it's very intimidating. I feel like if you were to make that less intimidating, I don't know how you would go about that, which things, but if there's a way to make the organizations seem more attainable, it's more kids, then maybe that would help too because we've expressed that the organizations make people feel like they belong. If we can generate that through an open, bring people into the fold that way.

**Linda:** I don't know if this is any way possible, especially not right away, but I think what would be helpful is if there were some adjustment to honors classes. Right now, the honors requirement is that the two sequence to critical thinking and great ideas first, second semester of your first year. I know a lot of my classmates who took that sequence and then never took a specific honors class since then or since even your first year elective.

I feel like if there was some way of making more higher level classes to be honors classes, not just audited honors classes, that might be a good adjustment. You're constantly staying connected with the honors community.

**Tai:** Or have more seminars, the seminars are cool.

**Derwin:** All right. So I think now we're caught up.

**Leigh:** I think so.

**Derwin:** What changes, and it doesn't have to necessarily be targeted at students of color, but what changes or adjustments would you offer to the structure, community or even the curriculum of the Honors College?

**Linda:** That's a big question. I think I just gave my answer.

**Derwin:** That's fine. We can use that answer for this one, too.

**Linda:** Okay.

**Walt:** I really don't know. Changes to the curriculum.

**Derwin:** Or the community.

**Linda:** Okay. I think it'd be really helpful for honors professors to have a meet and greet. The critical thinking and great ideas professors, because I believe that there's a strong stigma against some professors that make people not want to take really good classes. If there's a way for incoming students to meet those professors and have a personal connection before the class, I think that would really boost the productivity and the personal relationships of students to faculty.

**Leigh:** I like that idea.

**Walt:** I also think that's a good idea. I also agree with the original comment of having more specific honors classes as you go up into your level of classes instead of just having those 2010 and 2010 and just kind of being off onto your own thing.

**Mason:** I would say that maybe add more members of different minority groups to the faculty staff members, people. It's not all about feasibility but sometimes it's about their perspective or the way that they convey a certain set of materials because sometimes you have women studies or ethnic studies. It's really important for a person of color or a person of a certain marginalized group to present their perspective because that perspective is really unique itself. Just more members of minority groups would be a great thing for students. Gain some more perspective.

**Tai:** Yes. I feel like overall, the HLC is very connected and you have that sense of community because you live with them obviously. But the Honors College at large, I feel like there isn't really a community at all, if that makes sense. At least, at my level because, obviously, there are more years to come. But for right now, I feel like I'm more engaged in the HLC than I am in the Honors College at large which I feel should be the opposite, in a sense, where the Honors College should be this community and then, the HLC is just the cherry on top. Does that make sense? That sounds weird. I don't know.

I don't know how you would go about fixing that but just developing-- like with the meet and greets, I feel like those kinds of events are just getting all the Honors College, I know there's a lot of us, but maybe getting the fresh year Honors College kids together more often for different types of events to create that community. Because I feel like, yes, the HLC has it but if someone doesn't live in founders, and they're not in my immediate classes, I don't really have connections to them. It may be too large that it's physically impossible but some attempt at that would be amazing, I think.

**Leigh:** Any other thoughts about that? Cool. A few respondents in the survey we administer to students of color in the Honors College indicated that their first-year experience could be characterized by the word isolating, do you experience similar feelings? If not, why do you think a student of color might feel isolated in the Honors College or honors community?

**Walt:** Personally, I haven't had those feelings of isolation. Going back to one of my answers earlier, it might be a mental thing where in my mind I have the idea about looking around the classroom, there's not many people that look like me, I might, in my mind, isolate myself, but in reality, my experience with actual fellow students, with teacher, they don't do anything different with me that they would do with another student or anything like that. I guess, I'm not really isolated, but if ever I feel isolated it's just because of what's in my head looking the classroom and not-- I don't want to say being comfortable, but not having a connection, deep level of connection with anyone else in the room or very few other people in the room. What's the second part of your question?

**Leigh:** If not, why do you think a student of color might feel isolated in the larger community?

**Walt:** I think I feel isolated because I have those stigmas of what an honors college student would be or look like. Might be like a white-- not even a white male or female, just a white person in general, that's very studious and very smart, very stickler about everything, great student, great GPA, things like that. They might see that or have that image and they might say, "I'm not that person", they might tend to isolate themselves to fit that mold of what they think an honors college student might be or should be.

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Linda:** Personally, I didn't feel isolated my first year because of my race. I felt more isolated because of location and not living in founders, but I think that a student of color might feel isolated because there's this current-- they kind of comment, either you stereotype students of color and then you treat them in a certain way or you're too afraid of marginalizing them and you're too afraid of offending them that you just say nothing at all. I think because there's these two end of the spectrum, not enough people are in the middle where they're trying to open up discussion and trying to actually engage in that conversation. I think that lack of dialogue is what can make students of color feel even more isolated, compared to if they just completely try to not offend you.

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Tai:** I second everything that they said.

[chuckles]

**Mason:** I personally felt a little bit isolated of course. I think the main reason why was because I came straight from a high school where there were so many dynamics of students from different racial backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds, from different religions, with different socio-economic status and people with different sexualities. I was really lucky to be in that environment in high school, I was not really aware of deep racial issues and other sources of discriminations.

The moment that I got in campus and I had my first year experience, I felt a little bit isolated just because the environment in BG is really predominantly white. I was really confronted with that, it was like a shock because coming from an environment where diversity was really appreciated and then coming to a brand new environment where nothing like that is there. It was really confronting for me. I think it was the main reason why I felt a little bit isolated, it really hinder many possibilities that I could have had to connect with other people. I felt way too conscious about my race. I felt way too conscious about my own ethnic identity and things like that.

**Derwin:** [clears throat] I think-- [clears throat] excuse me. I think we touched on this a little bit, tip-toed around it with a few of our other questions, but the question we still have is, do you believe that having an honors class with a faculty of color is important, why and why not? I think we asked you two this one already.

**Linda:** Yes, I think it's important.

**Derwin:** Why?

[laughs]

**Linda:** I think it's nice to see that there are different people-- It's an identity. If I can see someone who looks like me, who speaks the same language as me, I can identify with them. Even if they're not the same, but just having that diverse background, I think, gives me the

impression that at least the honors college is making an effort to show different races, different people. I think that diversity, that difference, it should be valued.

**Tai:** I think it's also if you have the same thing like in every class, you're kind of stifling the education to some extent. There's certain topics that only certain group can really talk in full length, I feel like, without possibly like stepping on toes or offending. That really gives the students an opportunity to learn to the best that they can, if that makes sense? If nothing else, it's going to give students a broader perspective and they're going to leave more educated than I feel like they would if every faculty member had the same exact background, came from the same exact place. If they all came from Ohio, we certainly wouldn't want that, so why would you be okay with it and then the other instance, if that makes sense?

**Linda:** This is not completely related to the question, but what percentage of students in the honors college identified as students of color?

**Leigh:** I had that number written down, but I don't know it off the top of my head.

**Derwin:** It's somewhere between 10% and 20%, if I'm not mistaken.

**Linda:** It's more than I thought.

**Mason:** That is way higher than what I thought. Surprisingly.

**Derwin:** Well, there aren't that many of us. I think out of the 500 that are in honors, I think there are maybe--

**Mason:** 50?

**Derwin:** Yes, it's anywhere between [clears throat] and I think I'm may be over estimating it. I think that was university number, I think the Honors College number is between like 5% and 12%. Anywhere from 20 to 45, 50 people, well, at most.

**Tai:** That's why it's funny. Do you guys know Amanda Rzicznek?

**Participants:** Yes.

**Tai:** I love her. I'm in her honors 2020. Her topic is compassion, it's interesting because the class is legitimately all white females except for me, I'm Asian and then there's-- Oh my gosh, I forgot, I'm blanking on his name. But he is from Brazil and I think he's a senior because he seems a lot older than all of us. There's just me and him, then everyone else is just white women. [chuckles] For me and my roommate, because she's in that class too. We talked about how it kind of does to some extent stifles the conversation because everyone has the same opinion except for Mathias, that's his name. Mathias brings in a lot of different ideas, but that's kind of where it ends with the diversity of thought because everyone else was kind of the same, but they're not against him.

**Derwin:** Yes, I think so.

**Linda:** Okay, all right.

**Derwin:** Thanks. She did feel the need to mention that once or twice. Because like what-- okay. [chuckles] All right. Leigh?

**Leigh:** I can't count, nine. Cool. In that same survey, 82% of respondents rated having faculty of color in the Honors College between somewhat and very important. Only 32% of respondents indicated that they had taken an Honors class with faculty of color. For those of you who may have had faculty of color while in the Honors College, how do you think having more classes with faculty of color would impact you or change your learning experience?

**Walt:** Is this only a question for people who have had a faculty member of color?

**Leigh:** It sounds that way. Maybe if you didn't have, if you haven't had an Honors faculty of color, how do you think that will be more helpful to your experience, if you're not able to speak from personal experience? Right?

**Walt:** Did we answer this question previously in--

**Tai:** Yes, I think it was--

**Tai:** I think we answered it in the question before.

**Derwin:** Part of it is I think what we didn't anticipate with the focus groups is that people tend to answer peripheral issues when we ask a specific question. That's not a bad thing. It's just that because of that we've built in some redundancy just in case we didn't get to touch on those things. Fortunately though, you guys have been pretty inclusive with your answers in a sense that you don't just speak directly about the issue. You touch on things that surround the issue, that already addressed questions that we've come up with. Obviously we've gone a little bit into some of the questions that we already asked with this one, in terms of do you think we can give a broader perspective?

Or do you think it would give you somebody to identify with and it would help you diversify your learning? If you have anything to add to that, that's great. If not, don't feel obligated to make something up.

**Linda:** My Critical Thinking professor was a faculty of color but she wasn't an Honors faculty. She was, I don't know what they call it.

**Derwin:** Visiting professor?

**Linda:** A what?

**Derwin:** Visiting professor?

**Linda:** Isn't that someone who leaves BGSU.

**Leigh:** Adjunct?

**Linda:** Adjunct, yes. She's from another department but she just taught there. She taught a Critical Thinking class and have to be my Critical Thinking class. Can I mention names?

**Leigh:** Yes.

**Linda:** I had Dr. Hanasono. She was a great way for me to come in the university. It was a good class. I don't know how much it really tested my critical thinking skills but she did create a very welcoming environment. I was able to identify with her. That's the extent of my experience.

**Derwin:** Was that for your 2010 class you said?

**Linda:** Yes.

**Derwin:** How do you think that would have been different if the faculty had been maybe white? Do you think you would feel just as welcome or that you'd be able to, I think, be just as comfortable in that classroom?

**Linda:** I don't think so. I also get very anxious. I think especially during my transition from high school to college I was very anxious and paranoid about failing a class. I think it would have been helpful if I had a professor who pushed me more academically. I also think that if I were pushed more that first semester, it might have pushed me away from the Honors College because I wasn't mentally or emotionally ready to be pushed yet. I think my experience would be different especially if the professor was white too because Dr. Hanasono was an Asian-American female. That was someone that I connected with right away.

**Derwin:** Interesting. I don't think I ever met anybody who's had an Honors College class with someone of color.

**Linda:** She taught one class.

**Tai:** I didn't even know there was faculty of color. [laughs] I'm not going to lie.

**Derwin:** I think there is. I think that you got lucky, you got an adjunct professor.

**Linda:** My first year, my Critical Thinking professor was Dr. Hanasono. Then my Great Ideas professor was a professor who had a diverse sexual background. I don't know what's the best way to phrase that.

**Leigh:** Like orientation?

**Linda:** Yes. I had a very diverse first year experience.

**Derwin:** Luck at the draw. You had both of those, I've had none of them.

**Linda:** It was a good way to open up some dialogue.

**Derwin:** I think one of the great ideas that you guys talked about, was sexuality in there? Because I know there's like Christianity, Marxism, and capitalism. Like a lot of--

**Linda:** We touched on-- like that wasn't one of the great ideas, but it was just integrated into the main ideas that we had.

**Tai:** Amanda's class focuses on compassion and one of the elements is the LGBTQ. They kind of touched on everything.

**Linda:** Something similar to that.

**Derwin:** I don't think we had that in my great ideas class.

**Leigh:** I didn't.

**Derwin:** I guess our last question is pretty broad. Any final thoughts on the Honors college as a whole where you would like to see the Honors college go in the near future. What you would like to see from them in terms of efforts to improve diversity and inclusion. How you hope to see them improve, with regard to your perspective and what you would like to see in honors scholars. Not necessarily for everybody.

[silence]

**Walt:** Maybe just more-- I don't know if I've just missed it, but more like social aspects of things. I know never lived in founders when I joined Honors College, I lived in Kohl, I lived close to founders but not really, and I still live on campus but not in founders, so I've never been in that community, like living there all the time. I just kind of go there when I have classes and when am done, I leave and if I have an advisors appointment, I'll just go there and meet my advisor, and I will be on my way.

I don't really interact with the community a whole lot because I'm not in the honors community. I'm not really in any honors of organizations and that could be on me for not joining, but then at the same time I would like to see and I've heard of social events like Linda mentioned earlier, like a meet and greet with professors. Maybe just some sort of beginning social at the beginning of the year with students or something like that.

Just something in that capacity to do to get people meeting other people, to make those initial connections when the school year starts. When the semester starts, even if it's like in the spring semester when you're in a case like mine, where I didn't join in the fall, I joined in the spring semester so I'm coming in late but still having some sort of effort to make connections with those other students in the Honors College.

**Tai:** I think maybe for like recruitment purposes, like trying to get more like students of color or just like a broader, diverse range of students. Maybe try advertising the Honors College as something that's more attainable. Because I know in any instance when you see the title of Honors College, it seems like terrifying. That was a big reason why I didn't want to do it was because I knew I was already going to be busy with my music and whatnot. I didn't want to add another stress to it. Ambassadors do an amazing job of calming you down and like bringing you off the ledge.

**Derwin:** Thank you.

[laughs]

**Tai:** But I feel like that's, I don't want to say it's not enough, but it'd be nice if there was a way to demonstrate that being in the Honors College doesn't mean like you're stuck in your room all the time. It doesn't mean that you're so busy that you can't like take care of yourself. Because I feel

like when people look at the Honors College you do, I think like we both may have vetted out like when you picture an Honors student, you picture this snooty kid who's better than everyone and is super rich, when like you get here It's not that at all. But you know, if we can break down that stigma somehow, I think that'd be a better way of attracting a lot more kids of a whole bunch of different varieties.

**Linda:** I think it's not like, I completely agree, but then I think there's a catch 22, because students of color who are high achieving are often striving for very exclusive schools, and then I think Bowling Green just gets passed by because it's just Bowling Green. What is Bowling Green? And like they pass up Bowling Green even though the Honors College is here and they try to look for something more exclusive. If we make the Honors College less exclusive, then no matter what our efforts are I find that maybe students are passing it up regardless.

Then if we make the Honors college more exclusive then it falls back in that stigma. I guess it's who are we trying to attract? I think that question will dictate how the recruitment process goes.

**Tai:** Well too, also-- sorry.

**Derwin:** Go ahead.

**Tai:** I feel like if they're looking at more exclusive schools that maybe potentially have a higher diversity rate that may also be attracting them too, which is like, this is a good school and then they'll except me. Whereas if they look here, they don't see the diversity, they see a lower-- not a lower standard, but it just doesn't have the name tag on it. They're like, there's a chance I'm not going to find my home there.

It's not going to look as great as this other fancy school would. I feel like if we can get that, that at least breaks down at least one reason why they go to that one exclusive school. You know what I'm saying. Does that makes sense?

**Linda:** I always think back to-- because I'm from North East Ohio and there's a district around me, Solon district. Solon started out as not very-- it was relatively diverse but it wasn't very diverse but then Asian populations started building and then all of a sudden the school rating spiked all the way up. Then as a school rating spiked up, it attracted more students of color. It's like, what came first, the chicken or the egg? What is the start of it? I don't have the answer to that question.

**Derwin:** Here is my question you mentioned catch 22, no matter which way you are adjust there will be a population that will be pushed away or excluded. From a utilitarian perspective which population do you think will benefit the university more? Do you think you'll benefit more from those students who may be looking at other institutions that may be more prestigious or do you think we'll benefit more from those students who want to be included, and who could very well have solid GPAs and contribute to our community more? Just because there are probably more of those students who are not necessarily looking at more prestigious institutions but are actually just looking for a diverse population. Do you think we'll get more students from looking from getting that, for lack of better word, lower population than trying to attract those students who are looking for the exclusive feel of a university?

**Tai:** We also talked about ambassadors who are going to look at this like the cold version Honors College. I don't remember who it was but we met in admissions I think. They said that the Honors College actually loses money because they're giving so many scholarships away. That's why they need to even that out by accepting a lot of-- you know, not like I don't want to say like anything, but just not honors kids because they're not going to get as high as scholarship money. They're going to have to pay more, and as awful as it sounds in the mean side of things, yes, they are going to contribute more.

Also they have like-- if they see, if they get to campus and they feel what I a lot and a lot of other people felt which is what you're talking about the home, and the friendship, as corny that sounds, like a freaking bunny. If they feel that here and they know that they'll find it. I feel like when you go to visitation days, it's hard to determine is this real or this is a facade. They can see that this is real. You will find your place and even if you don't think you will, you will.

I feel like even if they don't have the highest GPA and the highest ACT, they can still make a difference just as any other kid would. They just need the opportunities and a little bit of a push to do it. I think that they can contribute just as much if not more in various different ways.

**Linda:** I second that. I think maybe a proper way to get the first of both worlds and maybe try to tackle both these population because I think both have something to offer would be, yes, it's important to make the students feel welcome at home but also connecting and relating with the parents. Oftentimes if you're a senior in high school, your parents, guardian, family members are the ones who are in a way influence your college decision. If they are commendable and means a good fit for their kid then they are more likely to persuade their kid to go here above a prestigious institution. Maybe starting in that than you---

**Tai:** Also they're sometimes helping to fund the education. [chuckles] If they don't like the school, they're not going to pay for it and you don't have a way to go to college.

**Derwin:** Fair point.

**Leigh:** Do either of you have any thoughts about that?

**Mason:** I mean, not particularly related to that, the over arching question of course. I do think that everything just boils down to a mental picture that we have of the Honors College or the people that are part of the Honors College. I think people from the higher up positions in the Honors College should be mindful of the fact that-- the way that you represent the Honors College is very important for the target audience because maybe the population of honor students are predominantly white and we cannot deny that fact, but in your promotional material, include the minority students of course.

I mean, not one or two people in a crowd of 10,000 or 200 honor students, but at least above like 10 or 20 or at least like all the minority students because we do want to add some vibrancy to that group that is extremely or predominantly white. We should be really mindful of the way that we present the Honors College to other people. I think that is a good start, if we don't start from there, I don't think people would actually acknowledge the diversity that the Honors College can offer or they cannot see the potential that the others college can give to students of color.

**Tai:** I definitely agree with that. The one thing that I want to watch out for though is that if we're trying to advertise as we're so diverse, then they get here and they're like, "What the heck?" [chuckles] They're sitting in their first class and it's like, "Where are my people?" [chuckles] I feel that's a very-- you've got to walk a fine line because you want to advertise so you can get people, students of color to then apply, get accepted and come here. But then you don't want to advertise that then once they get here, they find out that there's a very big lack of diversity.

It's like you're saying, which one do you do first, do you do the promotion hoping that it has results that you want and then it'll grow from there or do you wait until you can do some behind the scenes, make sure the population grows and then push the big advertisement. Because I would hate for someone to truly believe that they're coming to a school with-- they're going to-- not saying that BG they're not going to find the people, they will. But if they're sold something, then they will receive it and it's not what they bought, they're going to be very mad especially when they're paying \$20,000 for it.

[chuckles]

That's the only concern I have with that, but I definitely agree with you.

**Mason:** I think the way that we can resolve that kind of issue is that maybe for now in order to build up the population of students of color within the Honors College, we can start promote different honors program for continuing students who are here already on campus. We can still build up like a population of students of color within the honors college and when you welcome a new group of freshmen in and then they see that, there's these people who are students of color, of course, they will feel more welcome and they will feel reality really match up with the things that they advertise. I think that would be more an immediate resolution.

**Tai:** I have a question, if that's okay?

**Leigh:** Yeah?

**Tai:** With our particular Honors College and I think we've talked about it in the ambassadors or I forgot. Is it an issue of kids of color are not applying or kids of color not getting accepted or kids of color are just not on the radar in interest wise?

**Leigh:** From the work that I've done prior to this, from what I'm learning it's students of color are not applying because they just don't know about--

**Tai:** It's a lack of interest overall?

**Leigh:** Yes, to answer your question, shortly, yes.

**Tai:** Okay.

**Derwin:** Part of my research has included sitting on a hiring committee for Katrina who's our recruiter. It's myself and three other honors faculty who interviewed and assessed all the candidates, and part of what we required them to do was to present research. We gave them some of the numbers, some of the data from our acceptance and our application rates, then to use that

to create a presentation on how they would improve our situation and what efforts they would incorporate into their five years plan.

The data showed that very few like Leigh said, very few students of color are applying, and part of that is because of the disparity. I think from the additional research that I've done between the offerings of honors and advanced placement courses in high school, honors and advanced placements are offered at a much higher rate at predominantly white high schools, whereas predominantly minority high schools like in inner cities don't offer those that same level of coursework. Not only do students not have the foundation in their early education, but they are also, like you said, intimidated by the stigma associated with honors.

When they come to BG they either think they can't be honors, maybe they don't have what it takes or they've never been honors, and they wouldn't know how to go about achieving that goal or becoming an honor student. They're a lot of barriers associated with it but to answer your question. I don't think there's a huge difference between the acceptance rate between students of color and white students. I think the percentages are-- the difference is negligible it's pretty much the same. The difference is just the raw number in how many people are applying.

**Tai:** Very interesting. Thank you.

**Derwin:** I'm sorry, but I meant to tell you too that you can ask questions if you want. We're here to facilitate, but if you have questions about us or our experience or about the research, or about the acceptance rates or anything that has to do with honors, if we have the answers we'll give them to you. Last chance for questions, input, recommendations, hopes, wishes, dreams, arguments, personal attacks?

**Leigh:** I deserve them.

[laughing]

**Derwin:** Skipping questions and leaving people out.

**Linda:** Very interesting honors project.

**Tai:** Yes, I enjoyed it.

**Leigh:** Well, thanks. Thank you.

**Derwin:** Mine is better than Leigh's but--

**Tai:** Wait a second you guys are not working together?

**Derwin:** We are but it's conjunctive. I'm doing a different body of research than she is, but for the purpose of doing focus groups and finding and getting more information from honor students about their experience, our projects really lined up well kind of like a Venn diagram where it fell right in the intersection. We just decided to make more sense because we only have like 25 honor students instead of asking them to do the two different focus groups why don't we just pull our resources, do the focus groups once, and in that way we don't overburden you guys and we can get our stuff done in a more expeditious way.

**Mason:** You guys pretty much have the same source of data but like the orientation of your projects are different?

**Derwin:** Yes. At least for the focus groups.

**Leigh:** Right.

**Derwin:** Because I think-- did I send you the book list for my-- I sent it to Katrina. We've both done secondary research and the books that I've researched from are probably different from the books that she's researched and I conducted a survey for this before we did the focus groups. I don't think you did a survey.

**Leigh:** No, I haven't done a survey. I've been doing one-on-one interviews pretty much every day for the past couple of weeks.

**Derwin:** She's doing lots of one-on-ones.

**Leigh:** And not just with honors students of color but students of color that identify as high achieving all across the institution that are affiliated, not affiliated with, you know.

**Derwin:** Hers is a little broader in the sense that she's just working with students of color in general, who consider themselves high-achieving and try to learn more about their experience. Mine is more targeted towards Honors because I'm so involved with Honors, being an Honors Ambassador. Obviously, having been at Honors for four years and recognizing the lack of diversity in our population. I want to really hone in and try to figure out how can I try and get more people who look like me accepted into the program and encouraged them to do well and be high-achieving.

Because there are obviously students of color who are qualified to be at Honors, outside of Honors, who maybe just didn't do it for the same reasons that we postulated here. Maybe they didn't like it or maybe they didn't think that they can do it or have what it takes or they viewed the population as snooty or pompous and they didn't really want to be associated with it. We want to erase that and recruit and retain them before they get to sophomore year when they can no longer join the Honors College. Just trying to be preemptive and bolster our recruitment efforts in different areas. Especially, in different high schools.

Obviously, if we're going to recruit we need to focus our attention on retainment. Otherwise, it'd be no purpose in recruiting them. I'm working on the retainment piece where we're trying to improve, you guys as students, your experience in the Honors College and I'm working with Katrina and she's taking up the recruitment side of how can we attract them and get them here. It's two pieces to the same puzzle. Then, once my research is done, I'll give Katrina mine to help her with her retention efforts in creating programs and targeting our retention efforts toward students of color.

**Tai:** This question may not make sense. Do you notice the same hesitancy with high-achieving students of color who aren't in the Honors College for the university overall?

**Leigh:** Hesitancy regarding what?

**Tai:** Looking at BG.

**Leigh:** Wanting just to apply here?

**Tai:** Yes.

**Leigh:** From the folks I've talked to, BG wasn't always at the top of their list. A large part of that was because it is very visibly white here so that was something that deterred them but similar to what you talked about earlier, they were really attracted to the community and kind of like that sense of family. From campus visits, they would get the sense that they would belong and find their fit which is ultimately what would make them apply. Did I answer your question?

**Tai:** Definitely yes.

**Leigh:** Cool.

**Tai:** Thank you.

**Leigh:** Yeah. Any other thoughts?

**Mason:** Oh yeah.

**Leigh:** [laughter] No, you're fine.

**Mason:** It's like a last minute kind of thing. I think today on Facebook I saw a photo of you accepting something like an award or something from the Honors College. I thought that was really empowering because every day, on Facebook, it's like, "A white kid receiving an award. Okay, okay, okay." Then, today, it's like, "Oh."-

**Tai:** What did you [cross talk]?

**Mason:** -That was really empowering to see a person of color receiving an award from the Honors College.-

**Leigh:** Thank you.

**Mason:** - Get featured.

**Leigh:** I don't know what picture you're referring to. I recently won-

**Derwin:** She just wins so many awards.

**Leigh:** Two awards but-

**Derwin:** So many. [chuckles]

**Leigh:** I won Woman of Distinction last month and the CURS Diversity Symposium. I think that might be the one you're referring to.

**Tai:** Okay, yes.

**Leigh:** Yes, for this research.

**Participants:** Congratulations.

**Leigh:** Thank you. Oh wow [sobbing] Thanks.

**Derwin:** Is that the award you told me about?

**Leigh:** Probably. What?

**Derwin:** Remember we had talked about it. We were in a Starbucks for like four hours.

**Leigh:** Yes, I remember I was running my mouth.

[laughter]

**Leigh:** Awesome well, I don't want to waste any more of your precious time.

**Derwin:** Not waste. Take up your time.

**Leigh:** Take up your time.

**Derwin:** It wasn't a waste, [cross talk].

**Leigh:** I feel all the feelings right now. I'm very humbled by getting to hear each of your experiences and really getting an idea of what it's like for students that are not me and students that are not Derwin to know we're not alone in how we feel--

**Derwin:** Or crazy.

**Leigh:** Right. We're not [laughter] just out here just like, since we're sensing this problem, what's going on? Other students feel this way as well. I feel I can probably speak for both of us when I say that I think the main purpose or intention of this research is to do better for the students that will come way after you. In 10 years, no 5 years even, really visibly being able to see the Honors College look completely different than what it looks like right now. I mean, it's just-- it is so sad. I mean it really is. It's a tragedy how white it is [cross talk]

**Tai:** How female.

**Leigh:** That too, for sure.

**Derwin:** Part of that is just because unfortunately women are statistically much more high-achieving than men are, academically.

**Tai:** Really?

**Derwin:** Yes. Oh, yes.

**Linda:** Grade wise. Measured by-- yes.

**Derwin:** Performance not necessarily who goes to college.

**Linda:** Like intelligence, yes.

**Derwin:** How well you do, and how focused you are academically. The Honors College here, in my high school, in my elementary school, they were all predominantly women. I don't know what this is, I don't know what you can attribute that to. Unfortunately, that permeates our society, not just BG, but we're going to try and combat the diversity issue in terms of getting minorities involved because there is a precedent and other universities where we're severely lacking. They may still be predominantly female, but they have a much better diversity rate and I think we can improve that.

I'm not sure how to improve the male enrollment. I'm not sure how to go about that. [laughs] I wish I was, that could help, but we're focused on one thing at a time. Dr Brown one of the things that he always says like, "If you're going to do something and make a change, you need to focus on it. You can't change everything. Let others focus on other things and you focus on the one thing that you need to do to effect the most change." This is kind of our thing .

We're definitely hopeful that within the next five years I think Katrina was a great choice for us in terms of being our recruiter. I think she's great.

**Leigh:** I would agree with you.

**Derwin:** She really has like the heart and mind for it to actually like put these things into action. I have no doubt in my mind that she will. In a couple years when we come back as alumni and visit, we'll be able to visit and see the difference in some of the programs Katrina has submitted.

**Linda:** I just think it's so strange how you're-- I feel like your major in your college really influences your perspective on education, because in some majors, in some areas of study, students of color are definitely more dominant compared to—like communication.

**Participants:** Yes.

**Derwin:** I think they're very niche areas where students of color you expect them to be. Like sports management is predominantly Black.

**Linda:** Mathematics is mainly Asian-Americans.

**Tai:** Same with the music.

**Linda:** Yes. [laughs]

**Derwin:** Well, trying to get them to branch out and do different things like business.

**Linda:** Education.

**Derwin:** Yes. Yes. Please and thank you.

**Linda:** Is it bad that I'm not going into education anymore?

**Derwin:** I thought you were. You said you are student teaching?

**Linda:** Yes, and I go to grad school for just math.

**Derwin:** Well, for what? You want to be a mathematician?

**Linda:** I don't know. I think I'll be a math teacher after two years. This is like honestly just for my own self-fulfillment and enjoyment. I've taken four years of doing math Ed and I want to take two years to do something I really enjoy. Then after that maybe I'll make my way back to the classroom.

**Tai:** I also-- this is just a side note. I think it should be mandatory that-- were you the one that actually came and spoke to us about that inclusive language?

**Leigh:** I wasn't at that one.

**Tai:** You weren't at that one.

**Leigh:** I tried to be but--

**Tai:** Yes. You tried to be, that was it. We had an inclusive-- We had this woman come in and talk about inclusive language. I feel like that should be a mandatory class for everyone. That was really like eye opening for me. Simple things like saying, "Hey, guys." I would never-- it would never even have crossed my mind that that's exclusive. I feel like it should be mandatory for college kids to all take that kind of class, where it's something that has to do with people of color and have them maybe take one seminar that focuses on all that stuff.

**Linda:** If everyone participated in Opening Weekend--

**Tai:** Some kids can't. The FMB can't.

**Derwin:** What does that mean?

**Walt:** It's true.

**Linda:** [laughs] Opening Weekend, there are specific sessions dedicated towards diversity, inclusivity.

**Derwin:** The things the OWGLs run?

**Linda:** Yes.

**Derwin:** I went to four of those and then I just stopped going.

[laughter]

I think people need to get more realistic with what college kids actually want to engage in when they get to college. Nobody really wants to do hokey pokey.

[laughter]

That was in my freshman year. I was like, "Yes, I'm not-- no thank you."

**Tai:** Yes, at my suite they told me they didn't like the events but they like the OWGL. They just like liked the OWGL. They just followed him around like a puppy.

**Linda:** Like like?

**Derwin:** Yes, that's what she said.

**Linda:** Oh no. I think you had one of my OWGLs.

**Tai:** Probably, yeah, you're an Honors OWGL.

**Linda:** Yes, it was out of the world to think you have one of my OWGLs, just people are following him.

**Linda:** Also a lot of-- anyone who's in the FMB can't go to any of the Opening Weekend stuff, which stinks.

**Derwin:** Got to get ready to play?

**Tai:** What?

**Derwin:** Got to get ready to play?

**Tai:** Yes.

**Derwin:** We appreciate you guys' time and your input. It is invaluable.

**Leigh:** So much, I'm so happy. I feel so full. Before I forget, speaking of Katrina, you all talked about this a little bit.

**Derwin:** She did give you the flyers.

**Leigh:** She did.

**Derwin:** She hasn't emailed me.

**Leigh:** I went and picked them up.

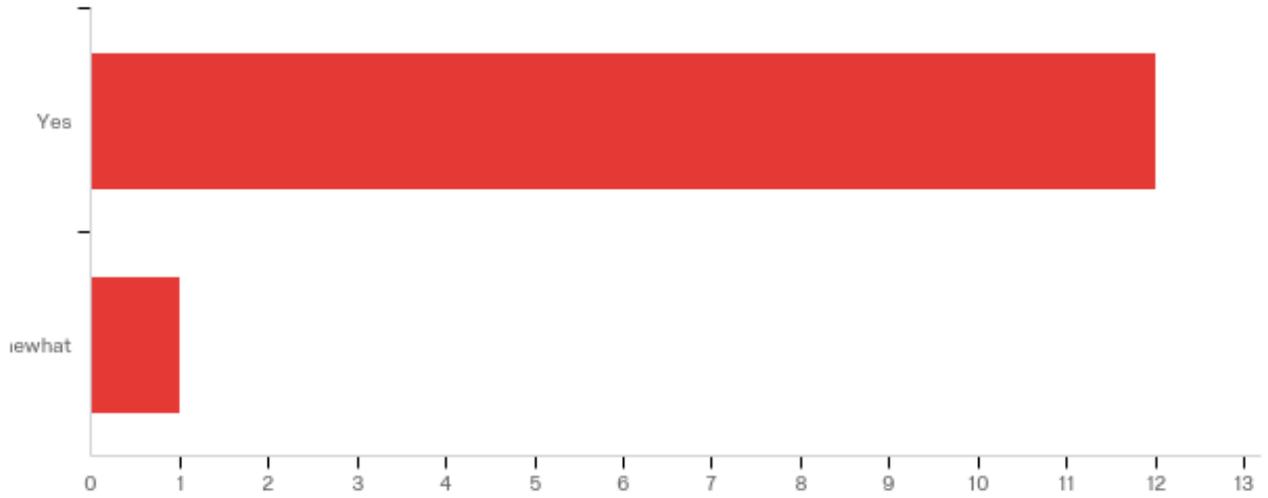
**Derwin:** You just didn't CC me, nothing.

**Leigh:** I already told you- okay, it's fine.

**[01:56:57] [END OF AUDIO]**

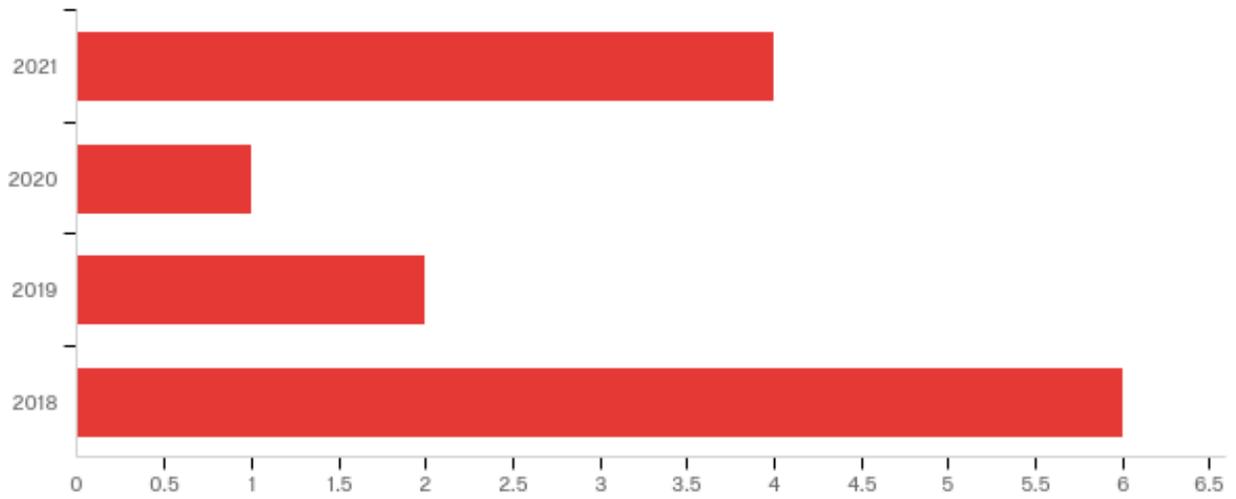
**Survey Results (only students of color)**

**Q2 - Do you identify with the term "student of color"?**



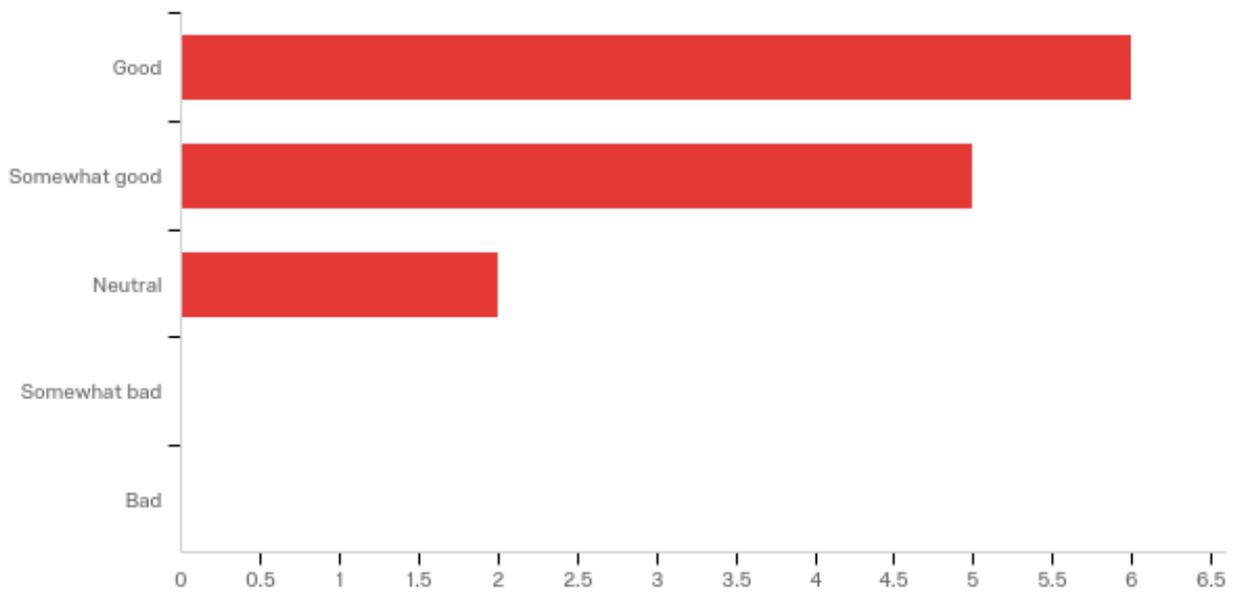
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	92.31%	12
2	Somewhat	7.69%	1
	Total	100%	13

### Q3 - When is your expected graduation date?



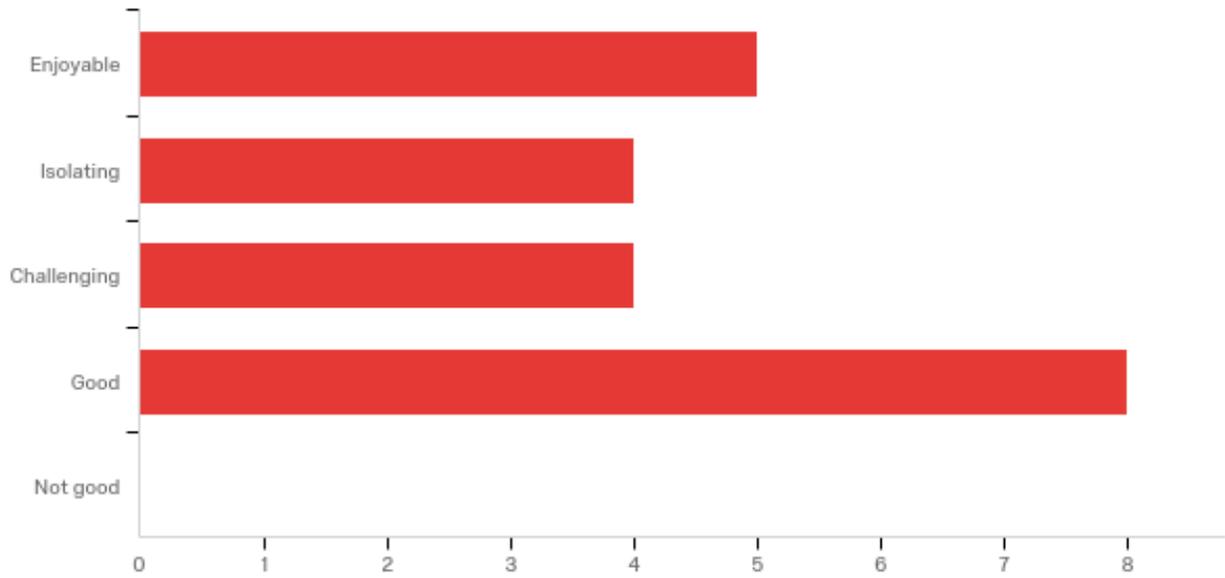
#	Answer	%	Count
1	2021	30.77%	4
2	2020	7.69%	1
3	2019	15.38%	2
4	2018	46.15%	6
	Total	100%	13

**Q4 - What is/was your first year experience like in the Honors College?**



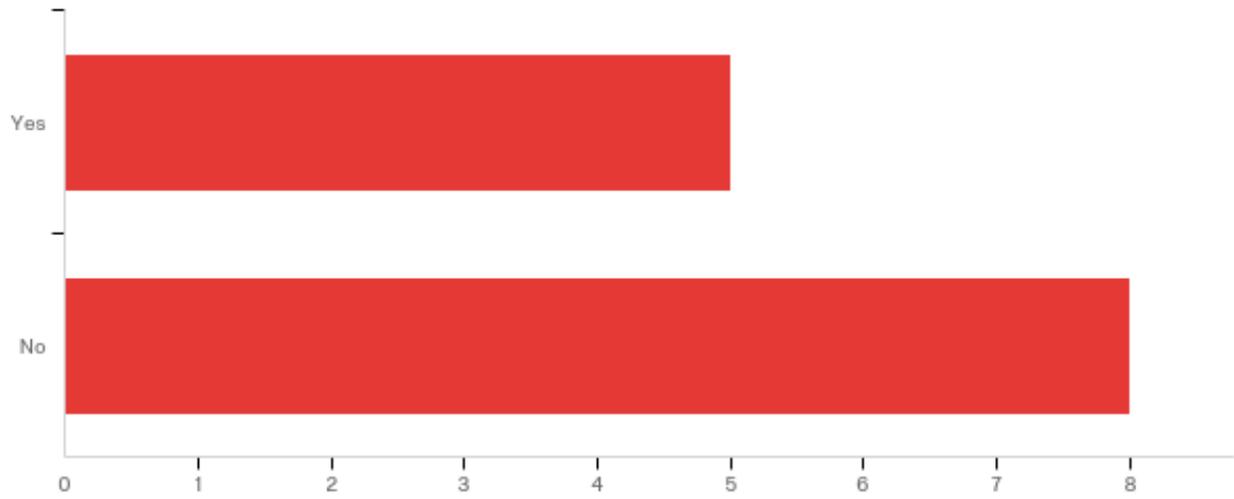
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Good	46.15%	6
2	Somewhat good	38.46%	5
3	Neutral	15.38%	2
4	Somewhat bad	0.00%	0
5	Bad	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

**Q5 - Which word(s) characterize(s) your first year experience in the Honors College?**



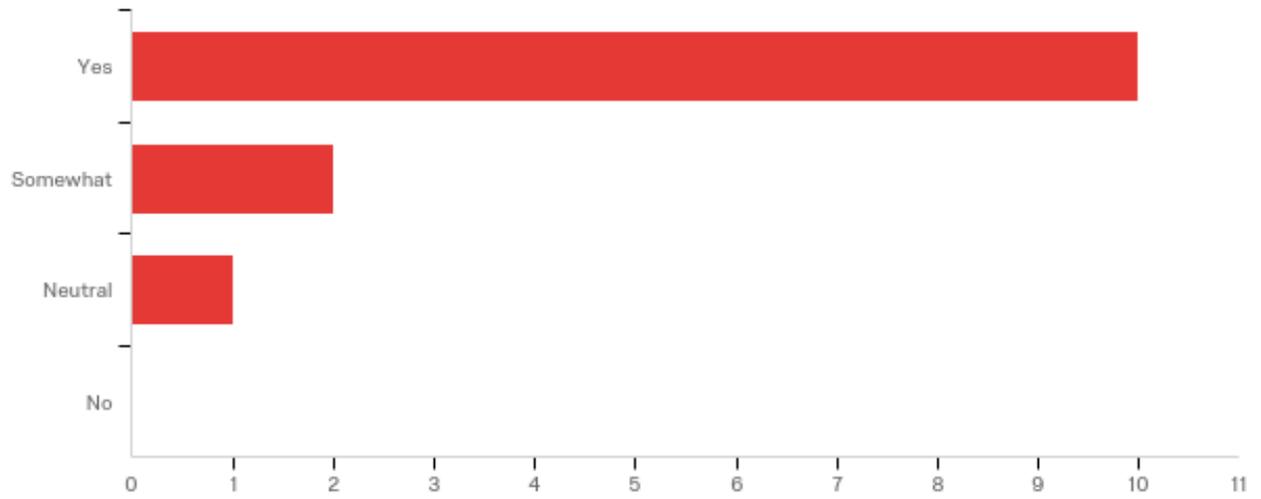
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Enjoyable	23.81%	5
2	Isolating	19.05%	4
3	Challenging	19.05%	4
4	Good	38.10%	8
5	Not good	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	21

**Q6 - Did you reside in Founders Hall your first year?**



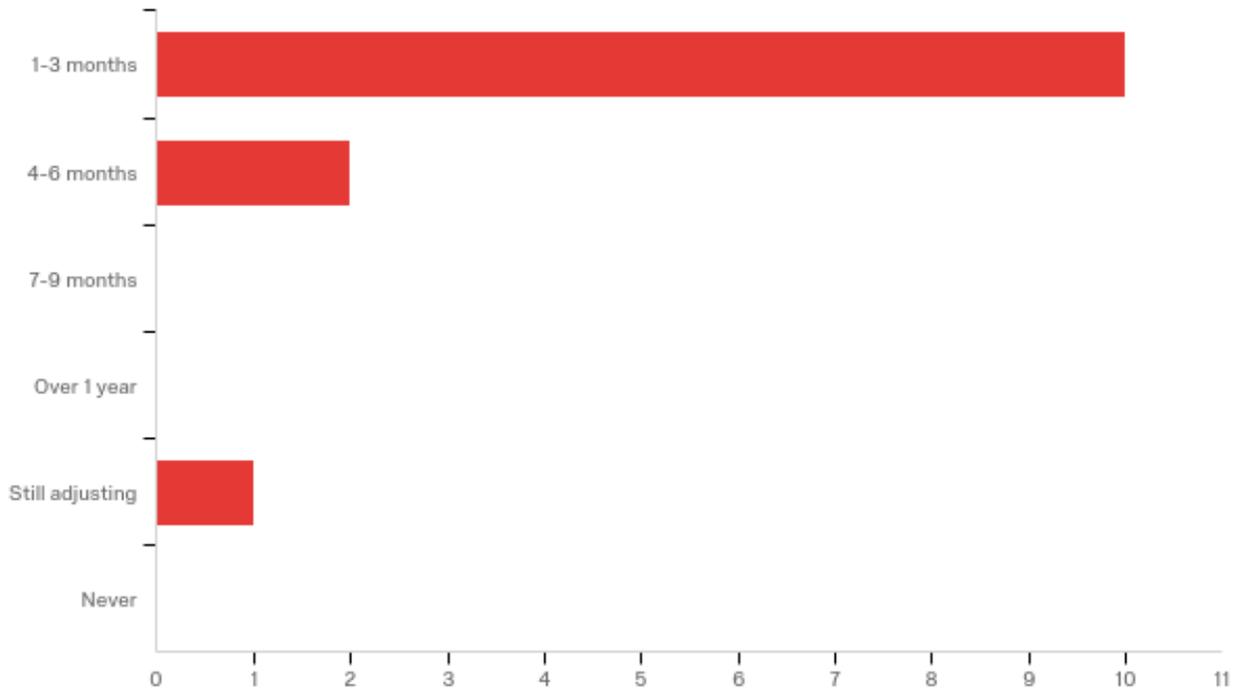
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	38.46%	5
2	No	61.54%	8
	Total	100%	13

**Q7 - Did you adjust to college life easily?**



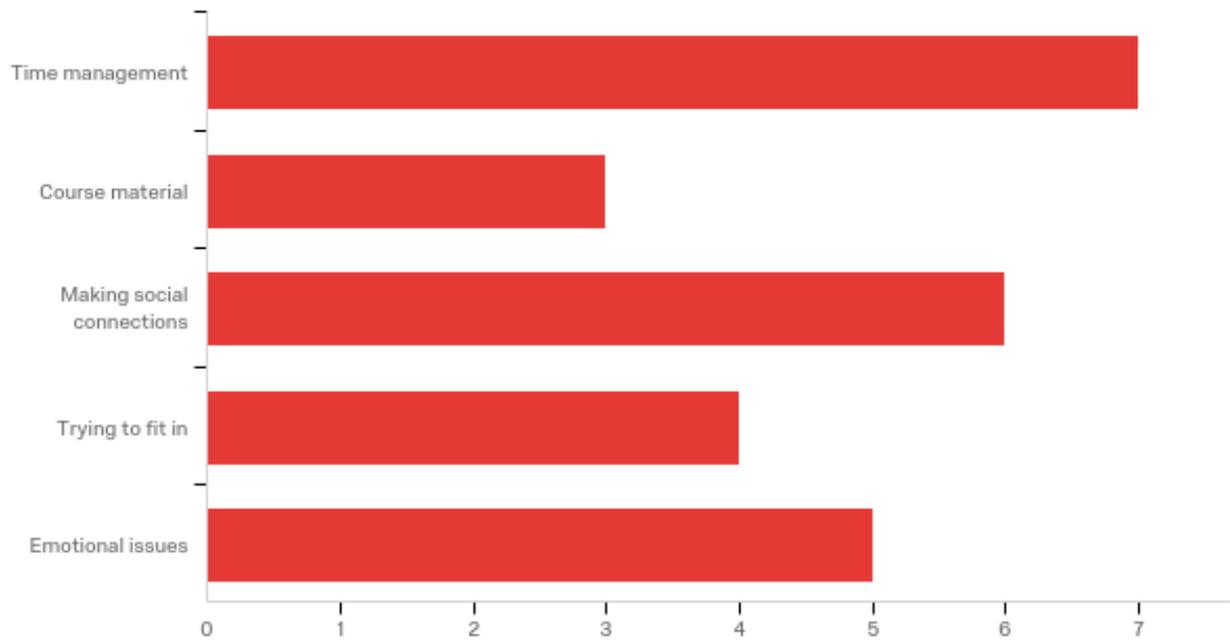
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	76.92%	10
2	Somewhat	15.38%	2
3	Neutral	7.69%	1
4	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

**Q8 - Approximately how long did it take you to adjust to college life?**

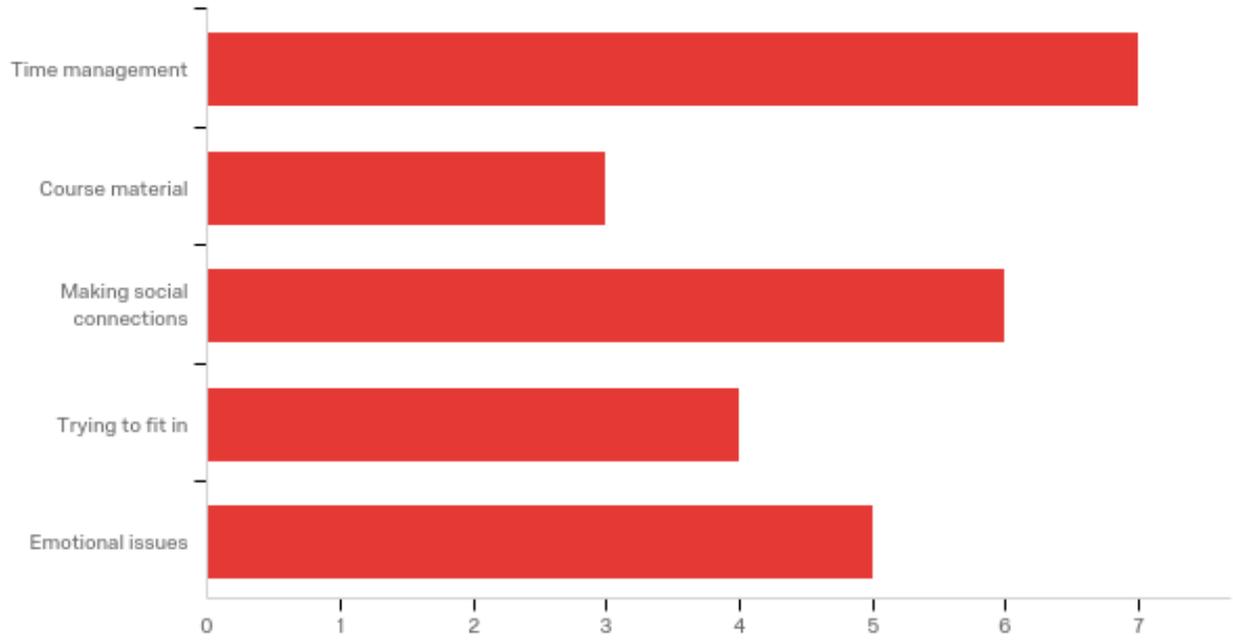


#	Answer	%	Count
1	1-3 months	76.92%	10
2	4-6 months	15.38%	2
3	7-9 months	0.00%	0
4	Over 1 year	0.00%	0
5	Still adjusting	7.69%	1
6	Never	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

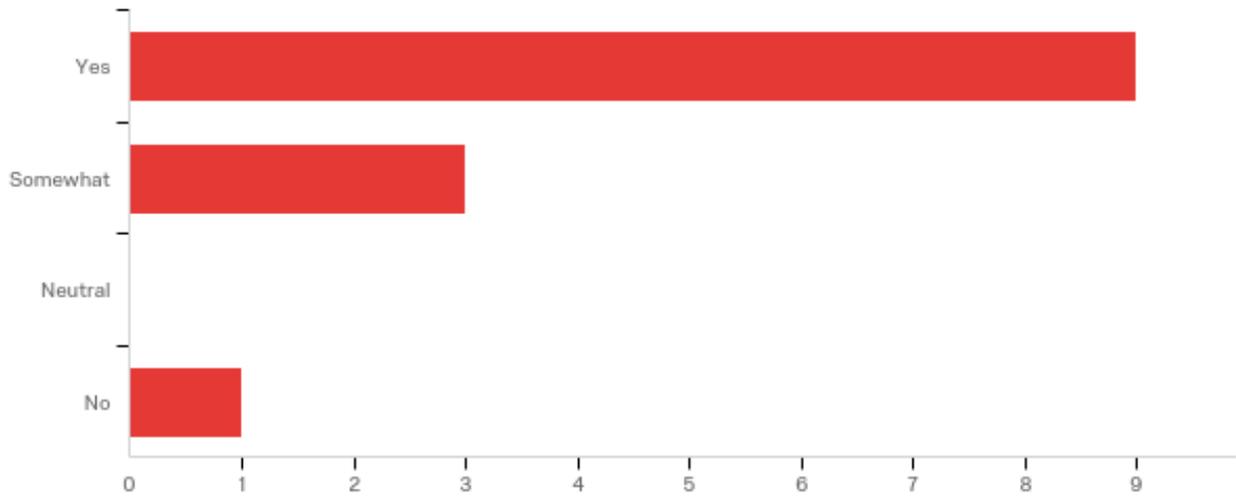
**Q9 - What challenges did you face/are you facing in your first year? Please select all that apply**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Time management	28.00%	7
2	Course material	12.00%	3
3	Making social connections	24.00%	6
4	Trying to fit in	16.00%	4
5	Emotional issues	20.00%	5
	Total	100%	25

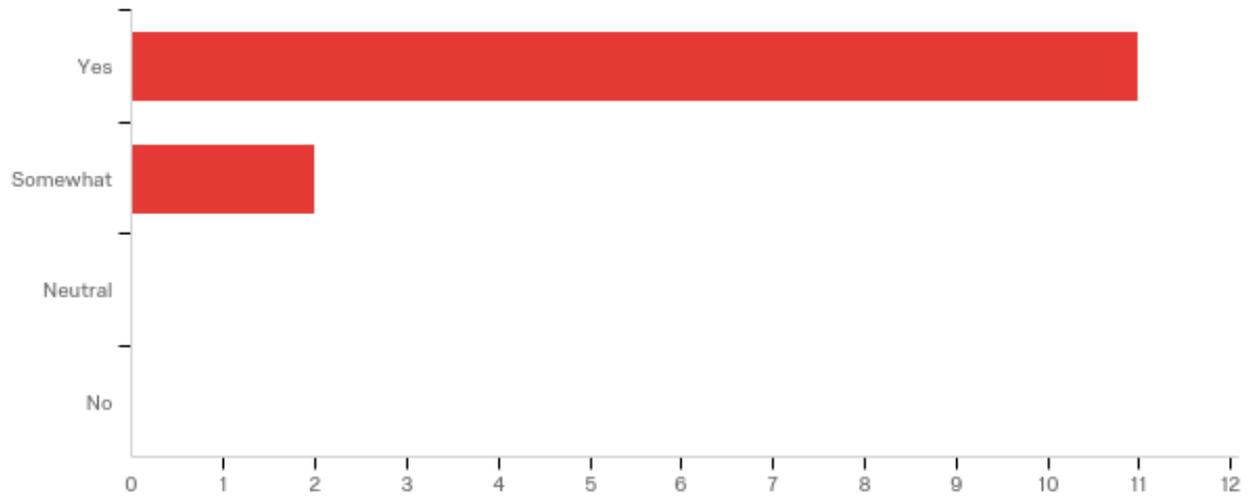


**Q10 - Do you feel that you belong in the Honors Community?**



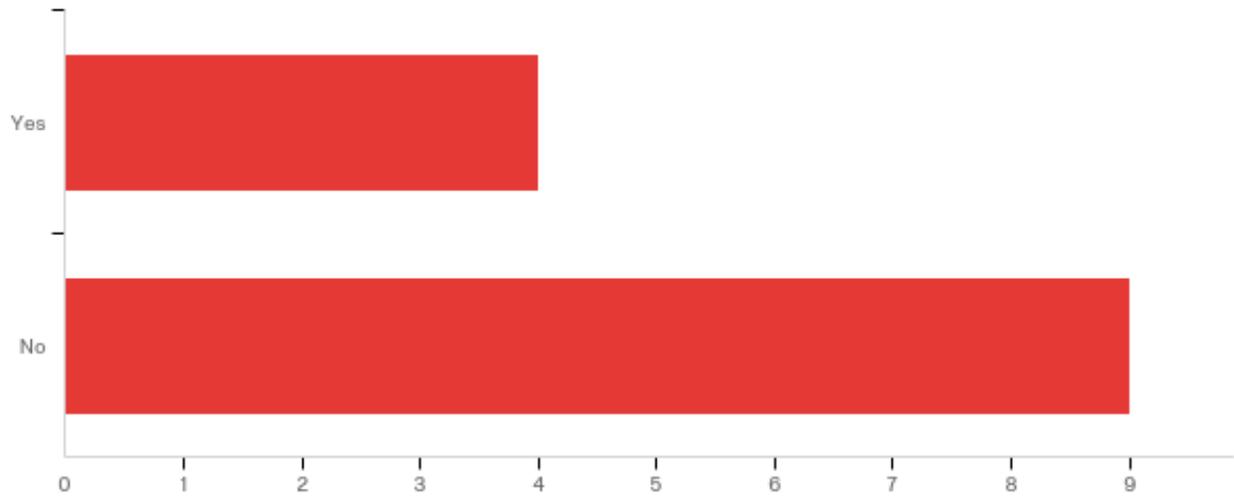
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	69.23%	9
2	Somewhat	23.08%	3
3	Neutral	0.00%	0
4	No	7.69%	1
	Total	100%	13

**Q11 - Do you identify with the term "minority student"?**



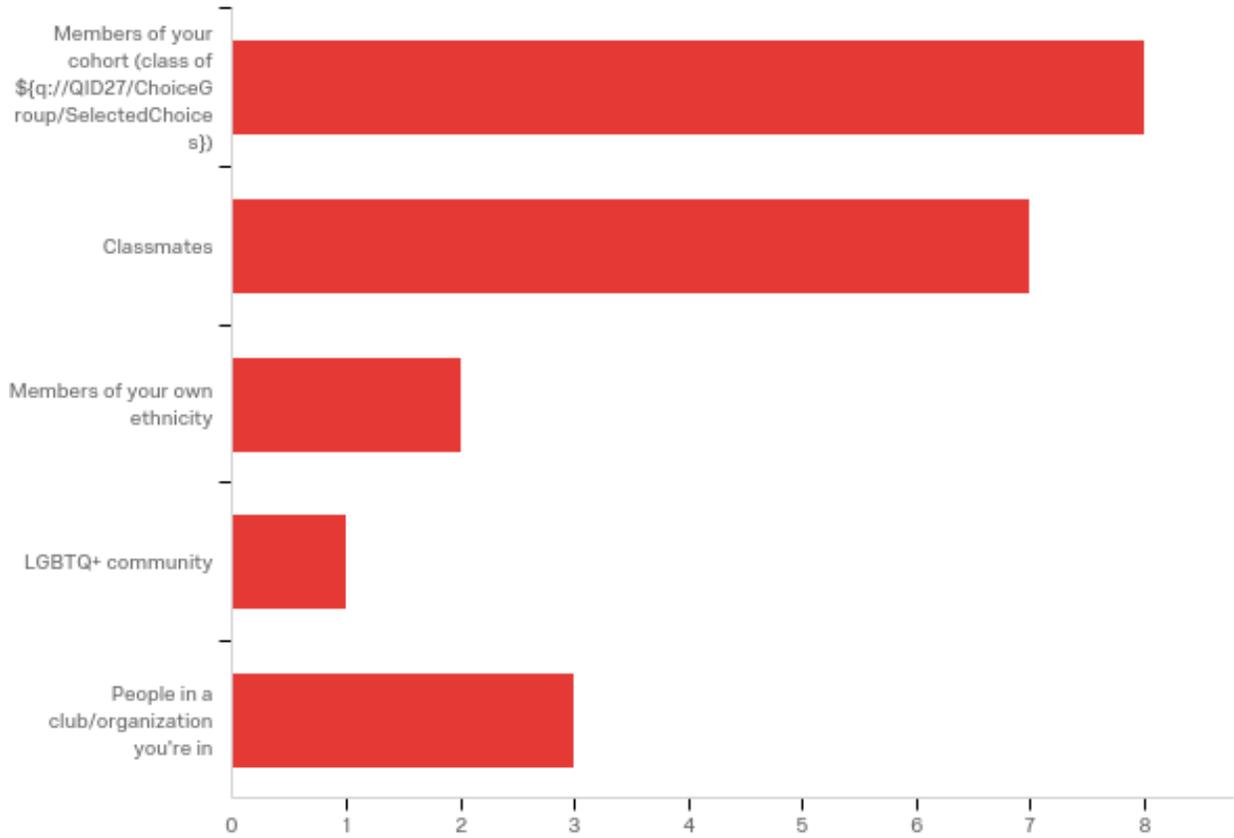
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	84.62%	11
2	Somewhat	15.38%	2
3	Neutral	0.00%	0
4	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

**Q12 - Are you friends with other students of color in the Honors College?**



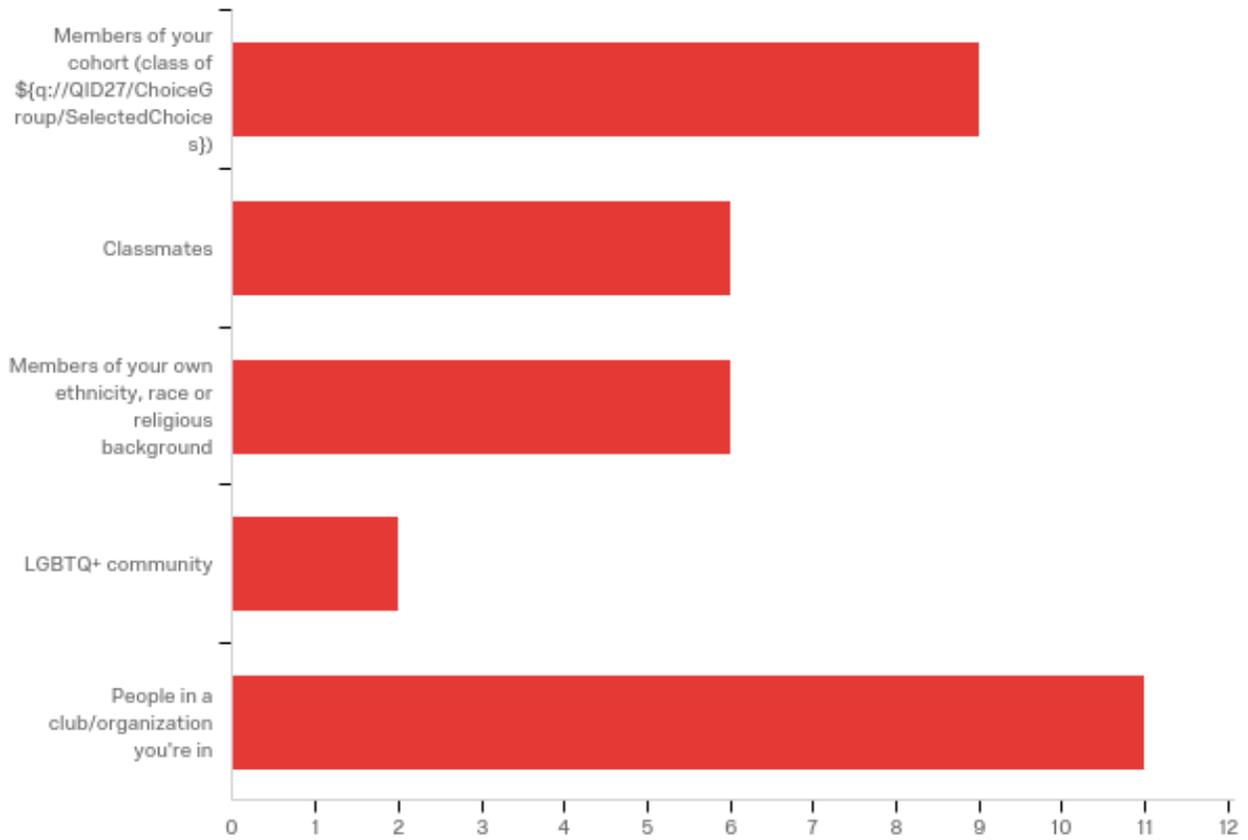
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	30.77%	4
2	No	69.23%	9
	Total	100%	13

### Q13 - What groups do you socialize/identify with in the Honors College?



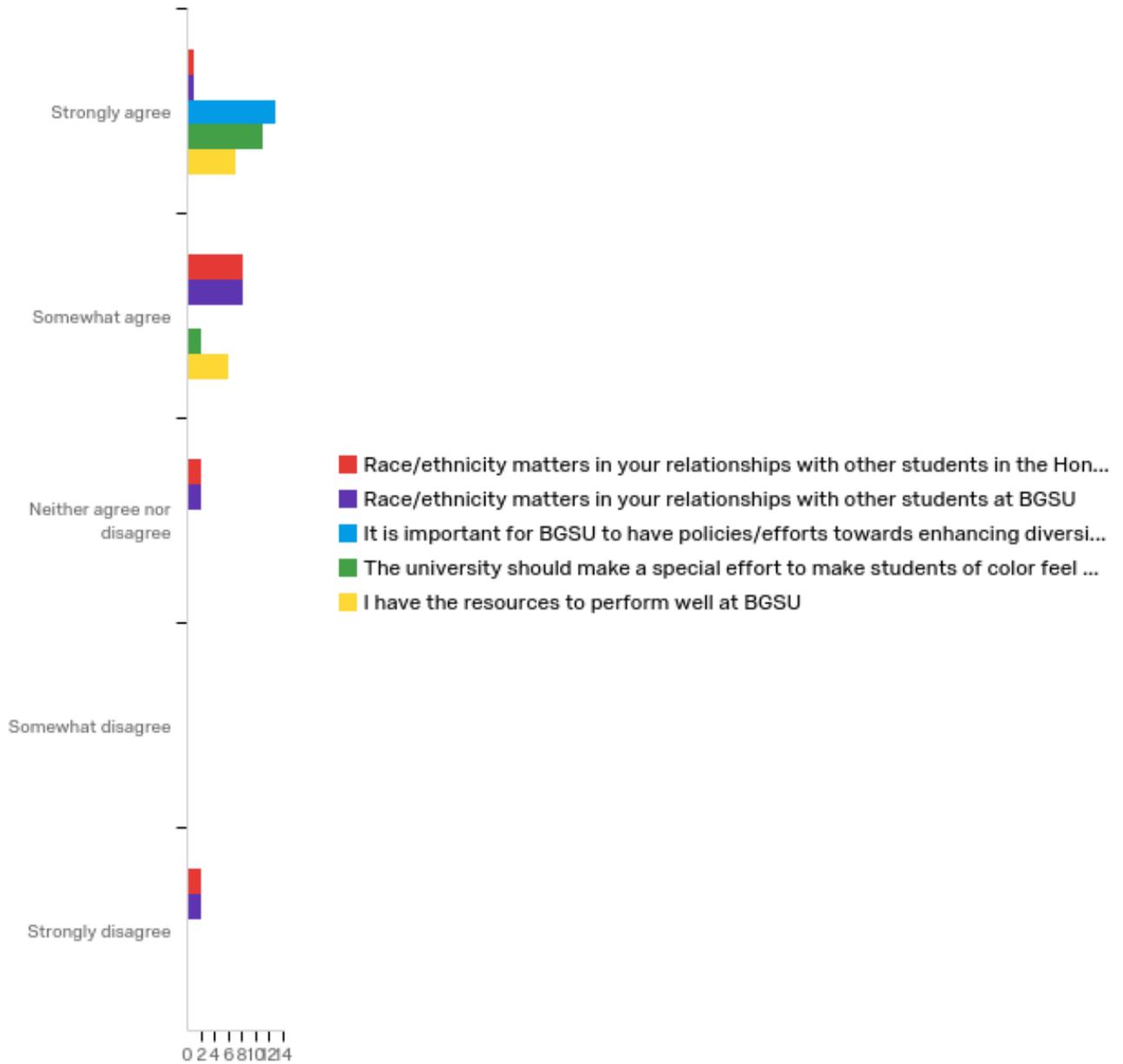
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Members of your cohort (class of \${{q://QID27/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}})	38.10%	8
2	Classmates	33.33%	7
3	Members of your own ethnicity	9.52%	2
4	LGBTQ+ community	4.76%	1
5	People in a club/organization you're in	14.29%	3
	Total	100%	21

### Q14 - What groups do you socialize/identify with at BGSU?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Members of your cohort (class of \${{q://QID27/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}})	26.47%	9
2	Classmates	17.65%	6
3	Members of your own ethnicity, race or religious background	17.65%	6
4	LGBTQ+ community	5.88%	2
5	People in a club/organization you're in	32.35%	11
	Total	100%	34

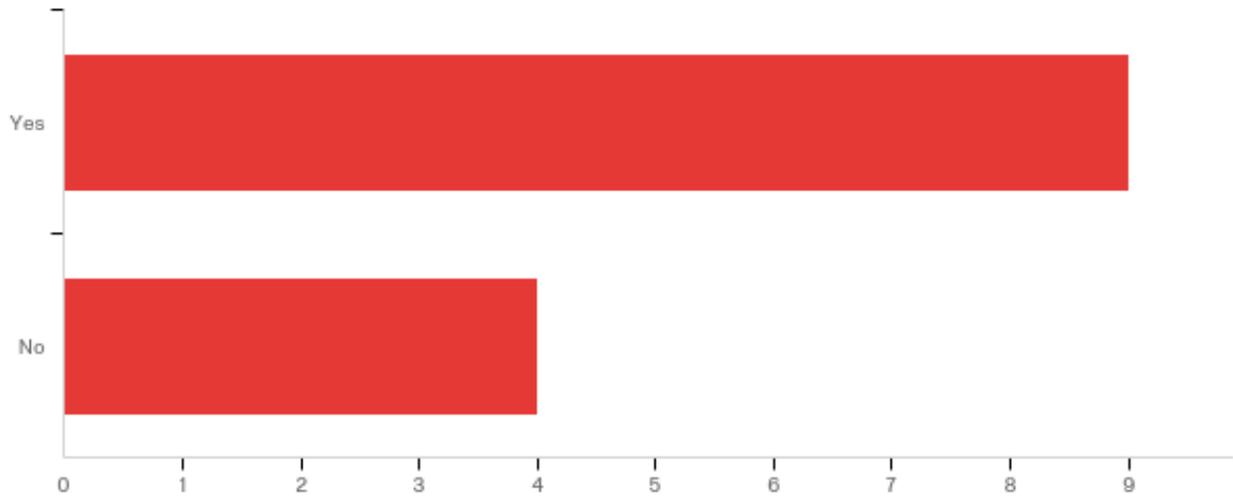
Q15 - Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements



#	Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	Race/ethnicity matters in	7.69%	61.54%	15.38%	0.00%	15.38%	13

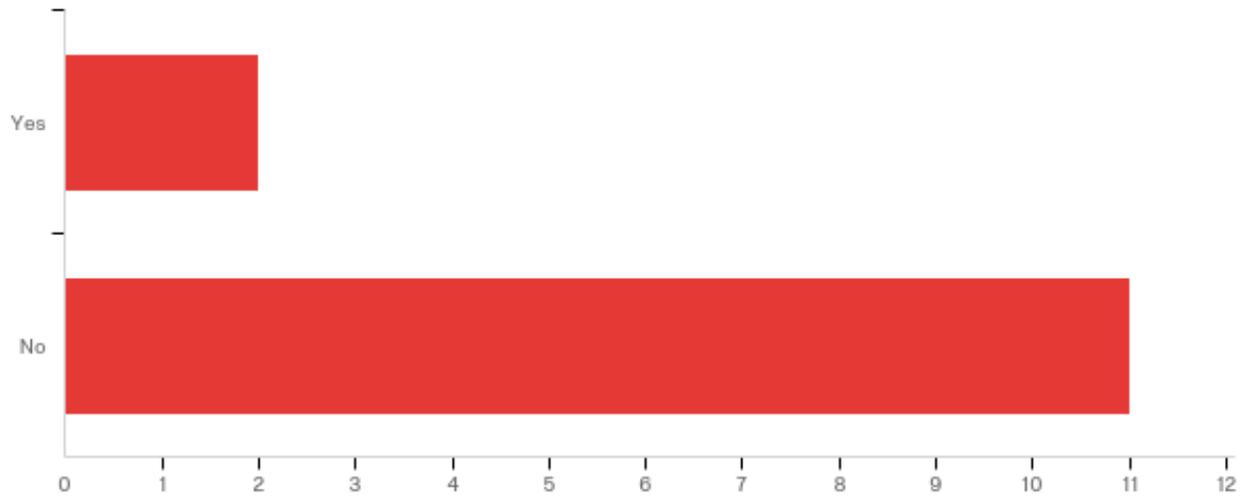
	your relationships with other students in the Honors College											
2	Race/ethnicity matters in your relationships with other students at BGSU	7.69%	1	61.54%	8	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	15.38%	2	13
3	It is important for BGSU to have policies/efforts towards enhancing diversity and inclusivity	100.00%	13	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13
4	The university should make a special effort to make students of color feel they are part of the BGSU community	84.62%	11	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13
5	I have the resources to perform well at BGSU	53.85%	7	46.15%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13

**Q16 - Are you aware of any programs/events at BGSU for students of color specifically?**



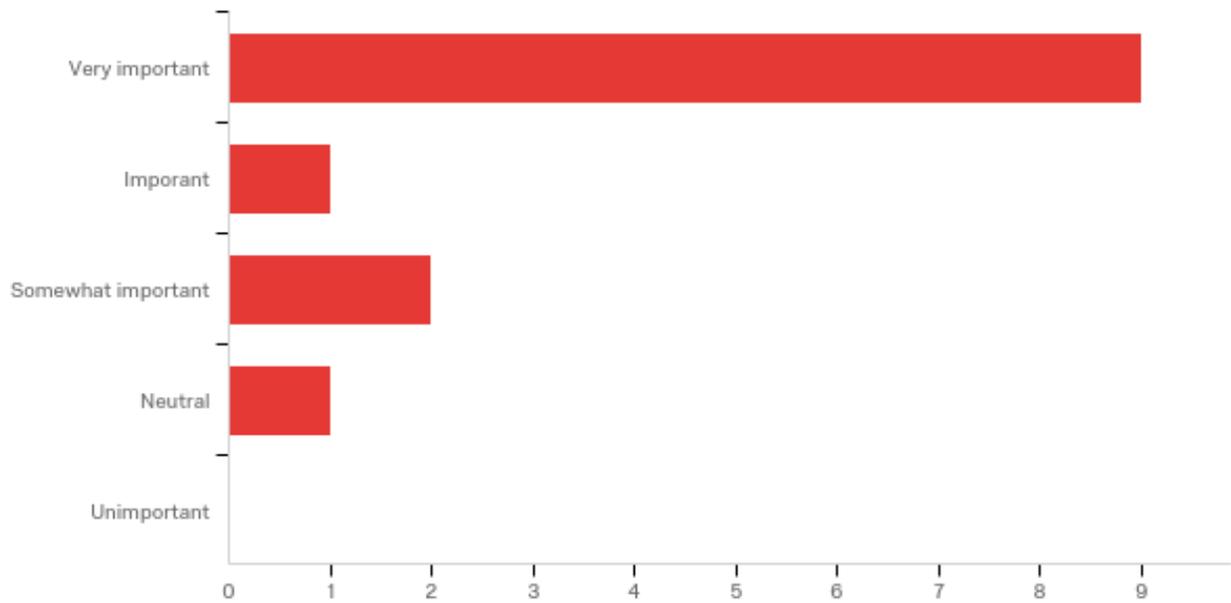
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	69.23%	9
2	No	30.77%	4
	Total	100%	13

**Q17 - Have you taken a class with a faculty of color in the Honors College?**



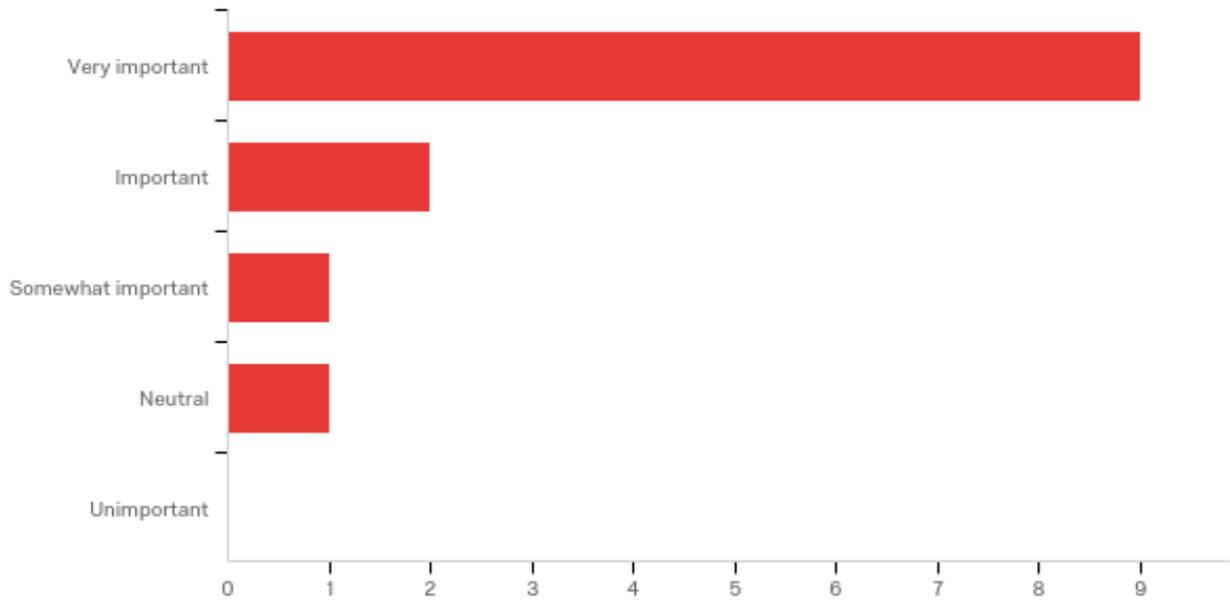
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	15.38%	2
2	No	84.62%	11
	Total	100%	13

**Q18 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color in the Honors College?**



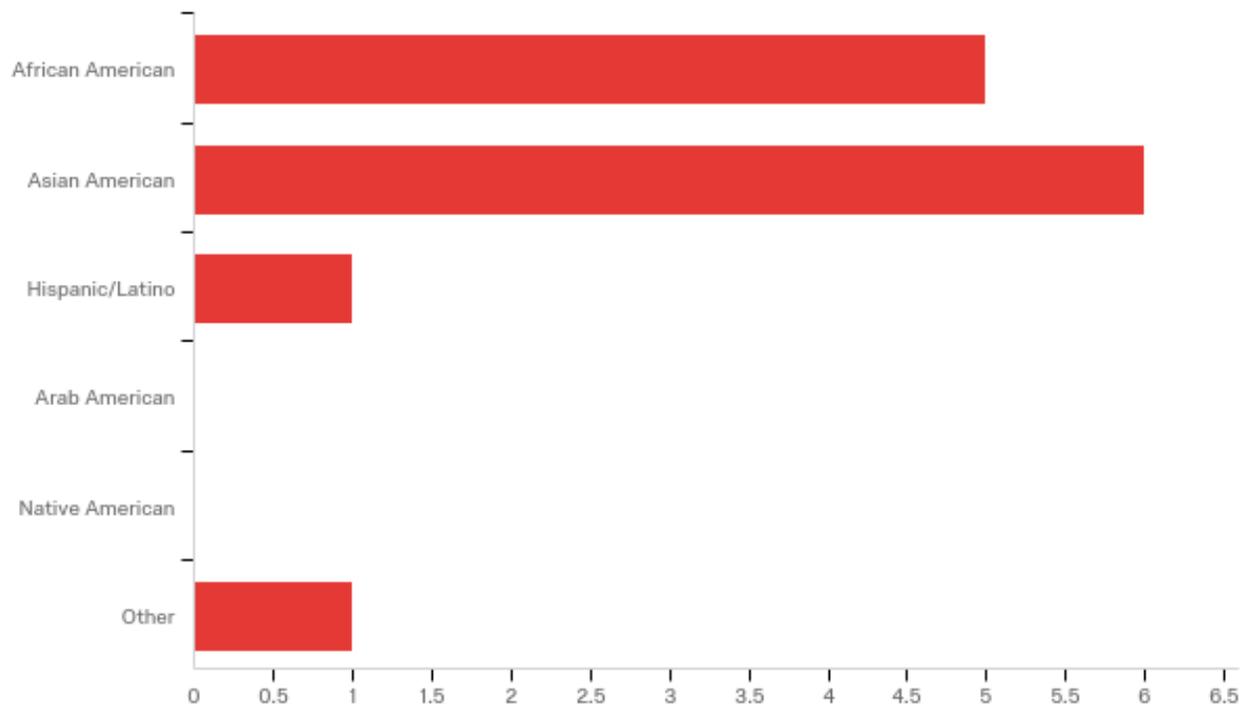
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	69.23%	9
2	Imporant	7.69%	1
3	Somewhat important	15.38%	2
4	Neutral	7.69%	1
5	Unimportant	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

**Q19 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color here at BGSU?**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	69.23%	9
2	Important	15.38%	2
3	Somewhat important	7.69%	1
4	Neutral	7.69%	1
5	Unimportant	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	13

### Q20 - What is your race/ethnicity?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	African American	38.46%	5
2	Asian American	46.15%	6
3	Hispanic/Latino	7.69%	1
4	Arab American	0.00%	0
5	Native American	0.00%	0
6	Other	7.69%	1
	Total	100%	13

**Q21 - If you answered other to the question above, please write in your race/ethnicity below.**

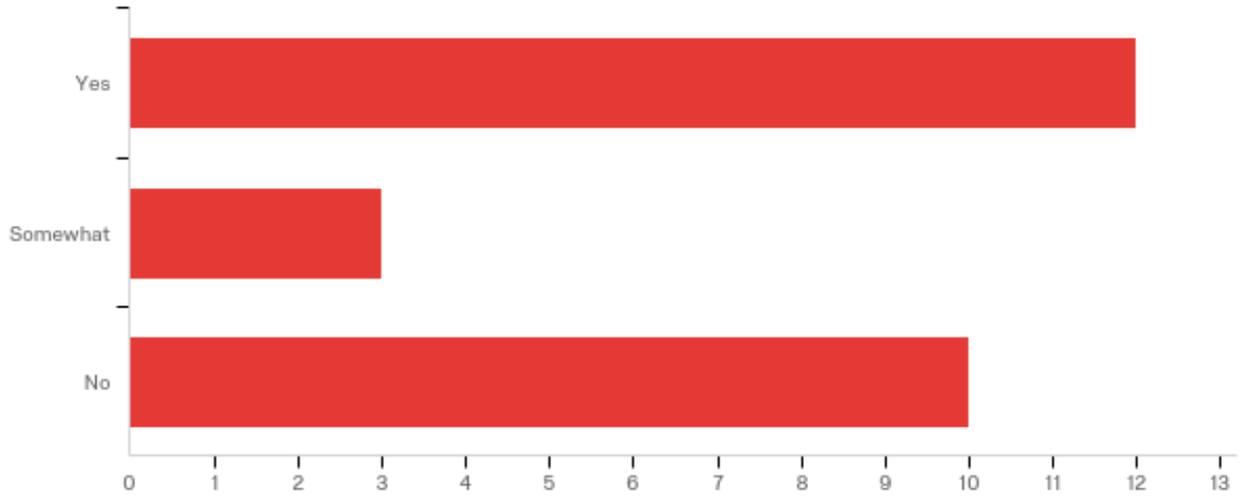
If you answered other to the question above, please write in your race/ethnicity below.

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Indian American

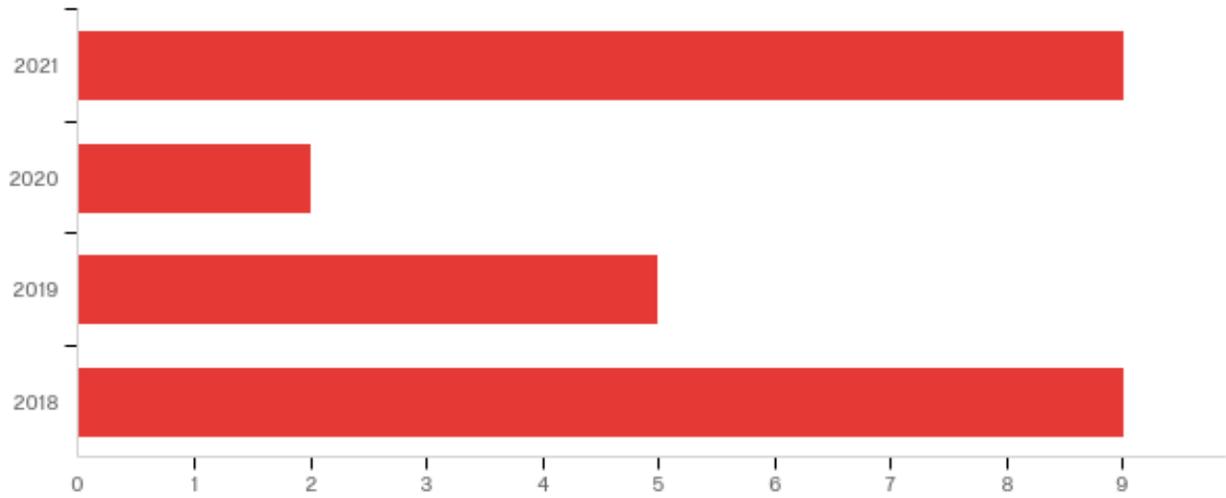
**Survey Results (including all participants)**

**Q2 - Do you identify with the term "student of color"?**



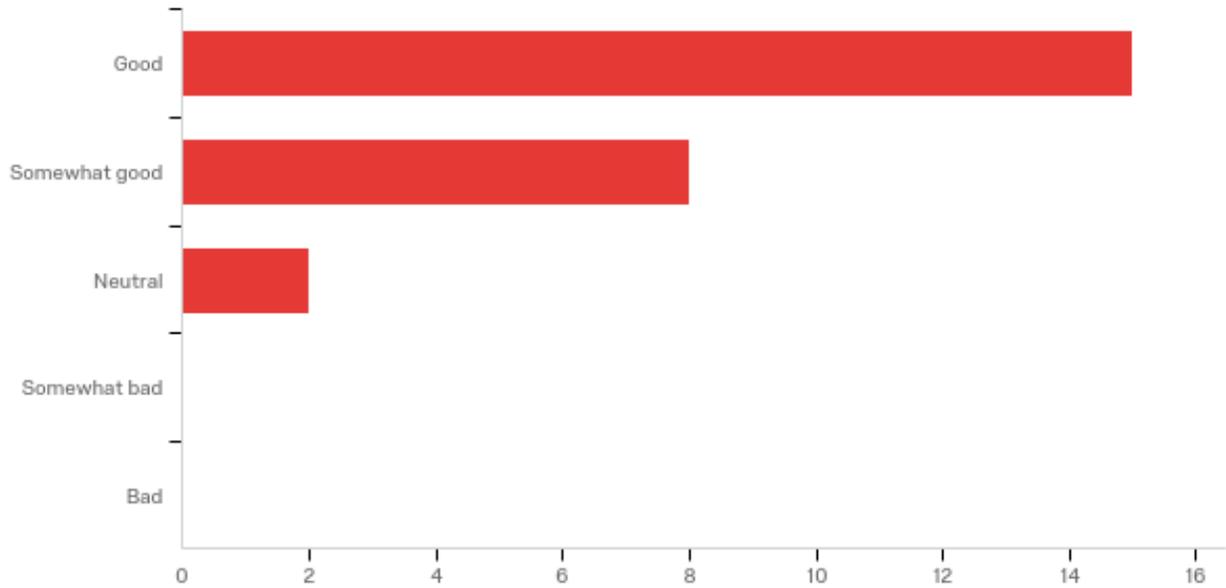
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	48.00%	12
2	Somewhat	12.00%	3
3	No	40.00%	10
	Total	100%	25

### Q3 - When is your expected graduation date?



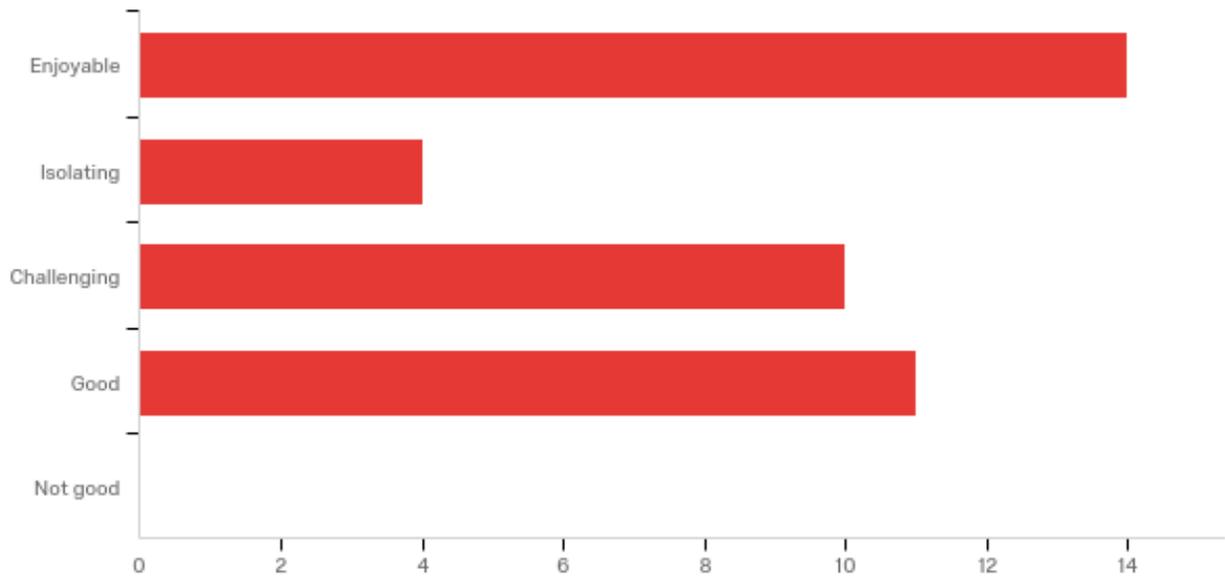
#	Answer	%	Count
1	2021	36.00%	9
2	2020	8.00%	2
3	2019	20.00%	5
4	2018	36.00%	9
	Total	100%	25

**Q4 - What is/was your first year experience like in the Honors College?**



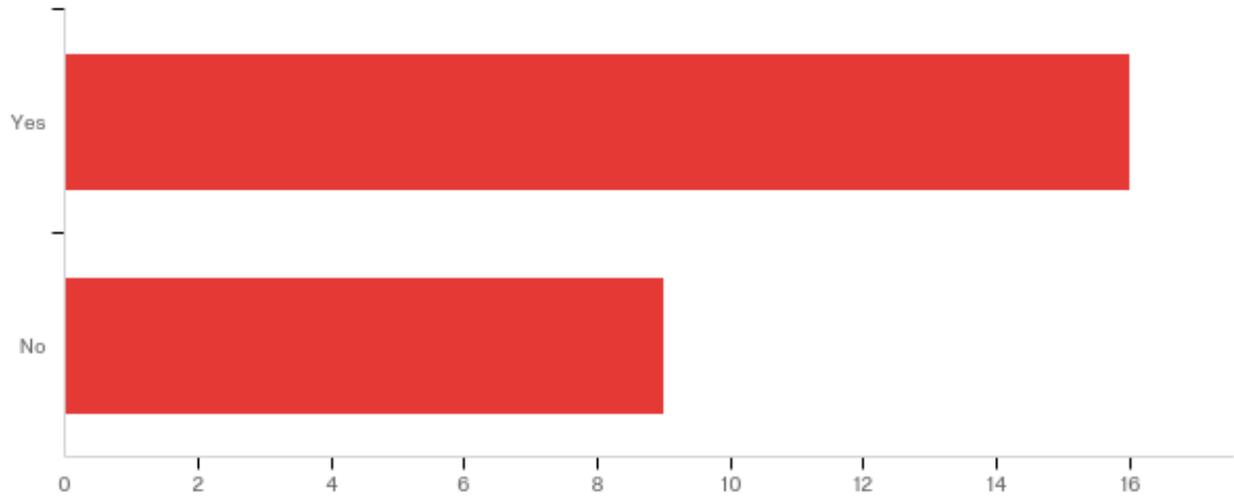
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Good	60.00%	15
2	Somewhat good	32.00%	8
3	Neutral	8.00%	2
4	Somewhat bad	0.00%	0
5	Bad	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	25

**Q5 - Which word(s) characterize(s) your first year experience in the Honors College?**



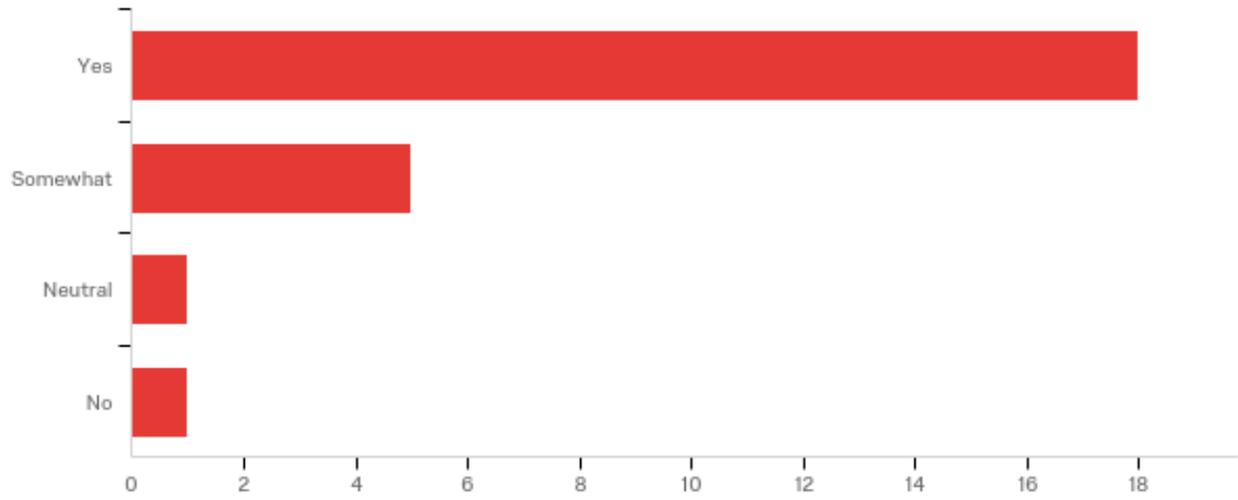
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Enjoyable	35.90%	14
2	Isolating	10.26%	4
3	Challenging	25.64%	10
4	Good	28.21%	11
5	Not good	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	39

**Q6 - Did you reside in Founders Hall your first year?**



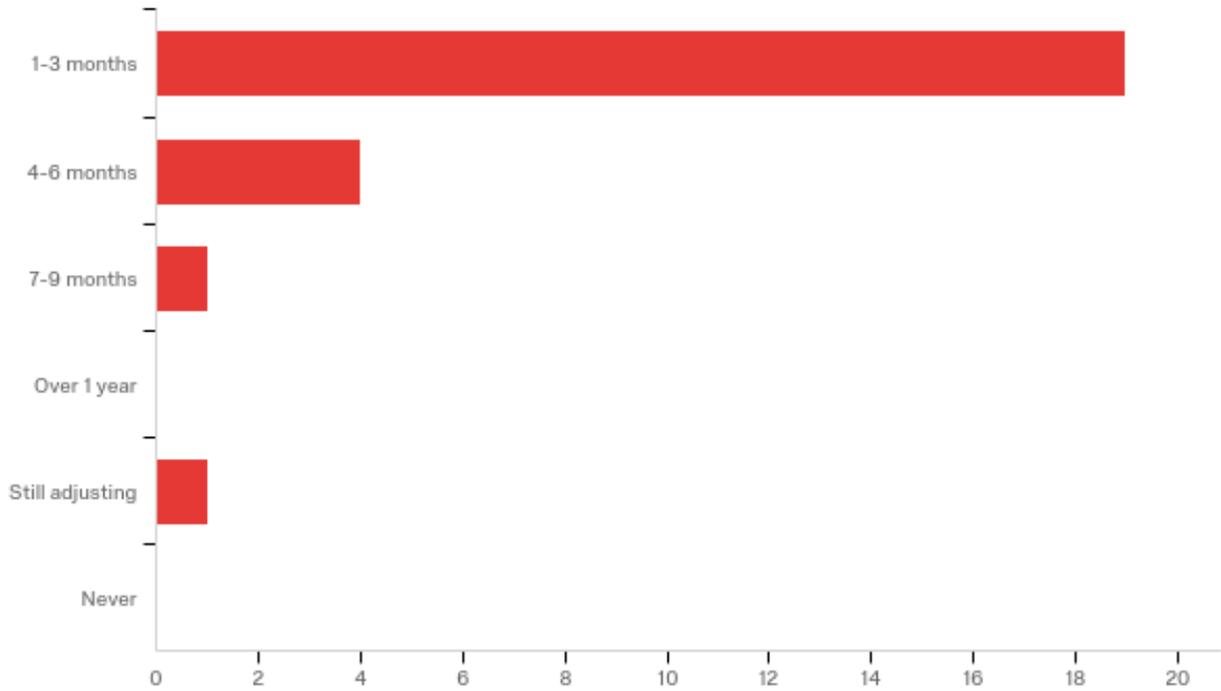
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	64.00%	16
2	No	36.00%	9
	Total	100%	25

### Q7 - Did you adjust to college life easily?



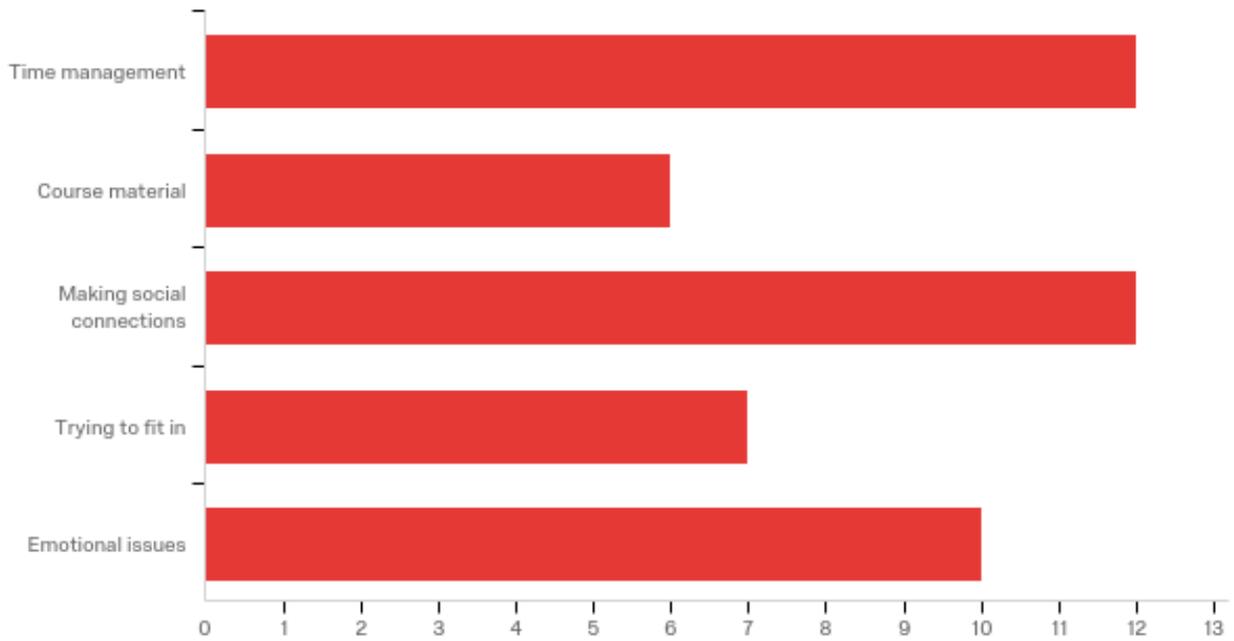
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	72.00%	18
2	Somewhat	20.00%	5
3	Neutral	4.00%	1
4	No	4.00%	1
	Total	100%	25

**Q8 - Approximately how long did it take you to adjust to college life?**

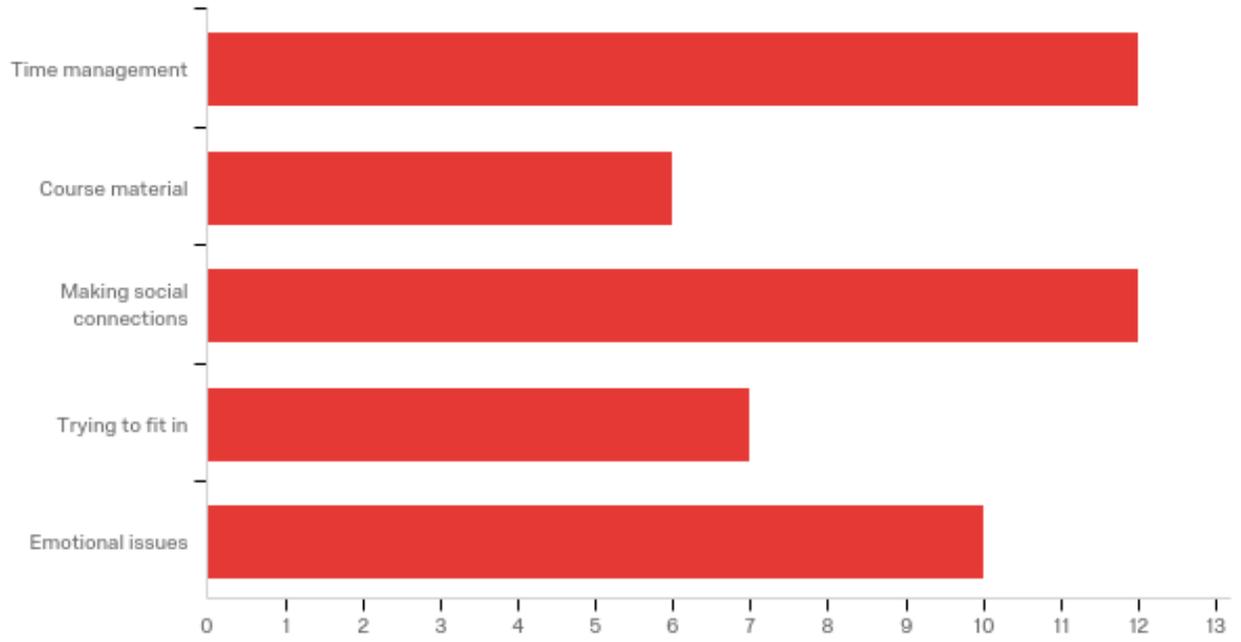


#	Answer	%	Count
1	1-3 months	76.00%	19
2	4-6 months	16.00%	4
3	7-9 months	4.00%	1
4	Over 1 year	0.00%	0
5	Still adjusting	4.00%	1
6	Never	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	25

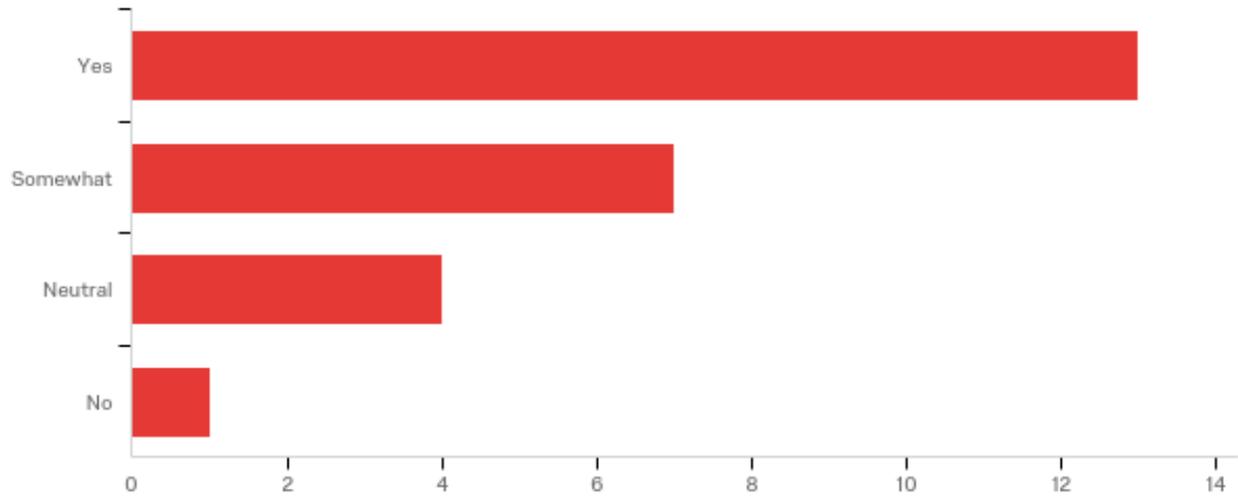
**Q9 - What challenges did you face/are you facing in your first year? Please select all that apply**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Time management	25.53%	12
2	Course material	12.77%	6
3	Making social connections	25.53%	12
4	Trying to fit in	14.89%	7
5	Emotional issues	21.28%	10
	Total	100%	47

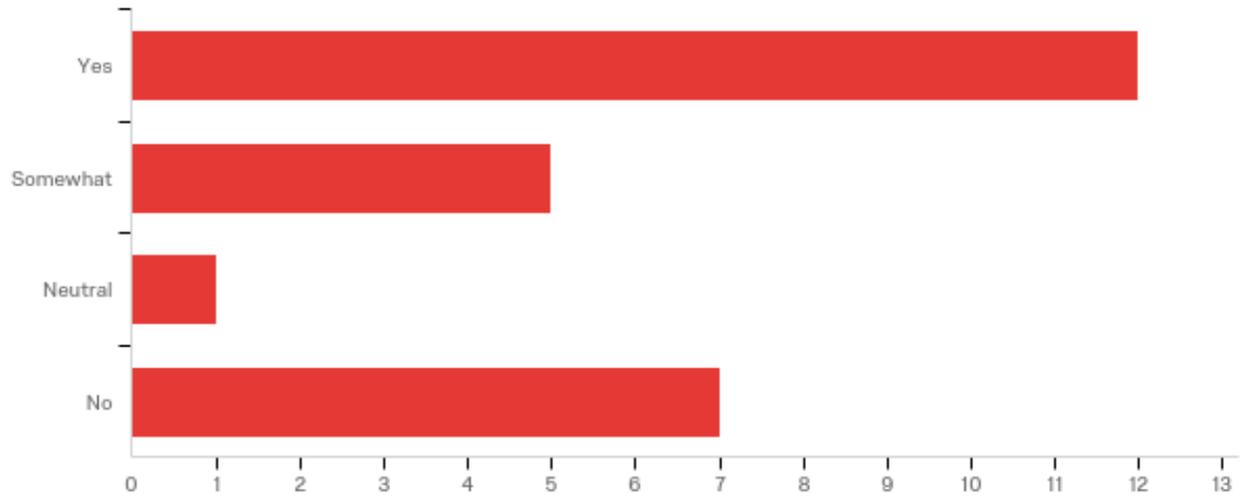


**Q10 - Do you feel that you belong in the Honors Community?**



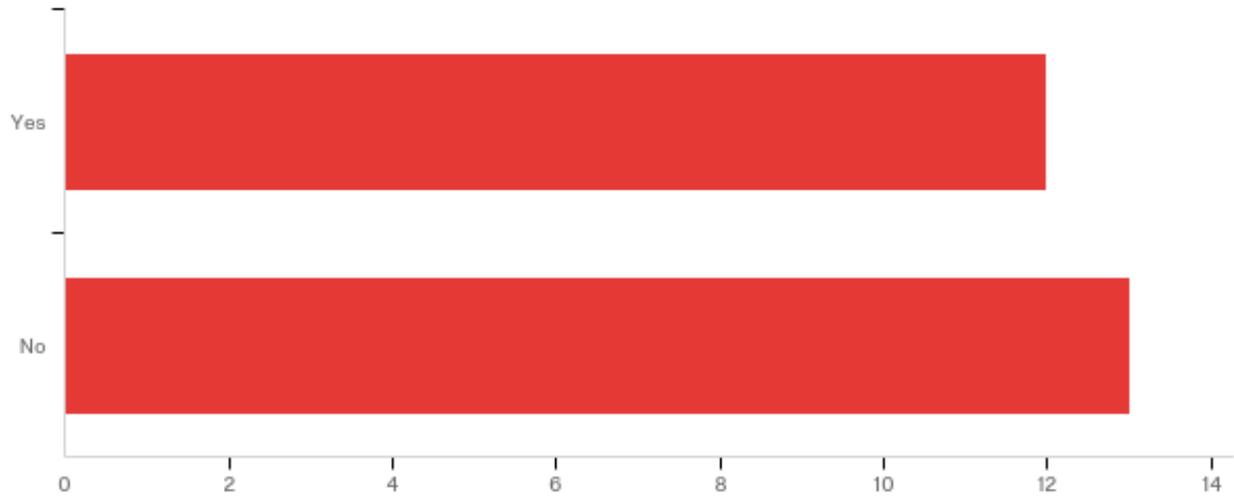
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	52.00%	13
2	Somewhat	28.00%	7
3	Neutral	16.00%	4
4	No	4.00%	1
	Total	100%	25

**Q11 - Do you identify with the term "minority student"?**



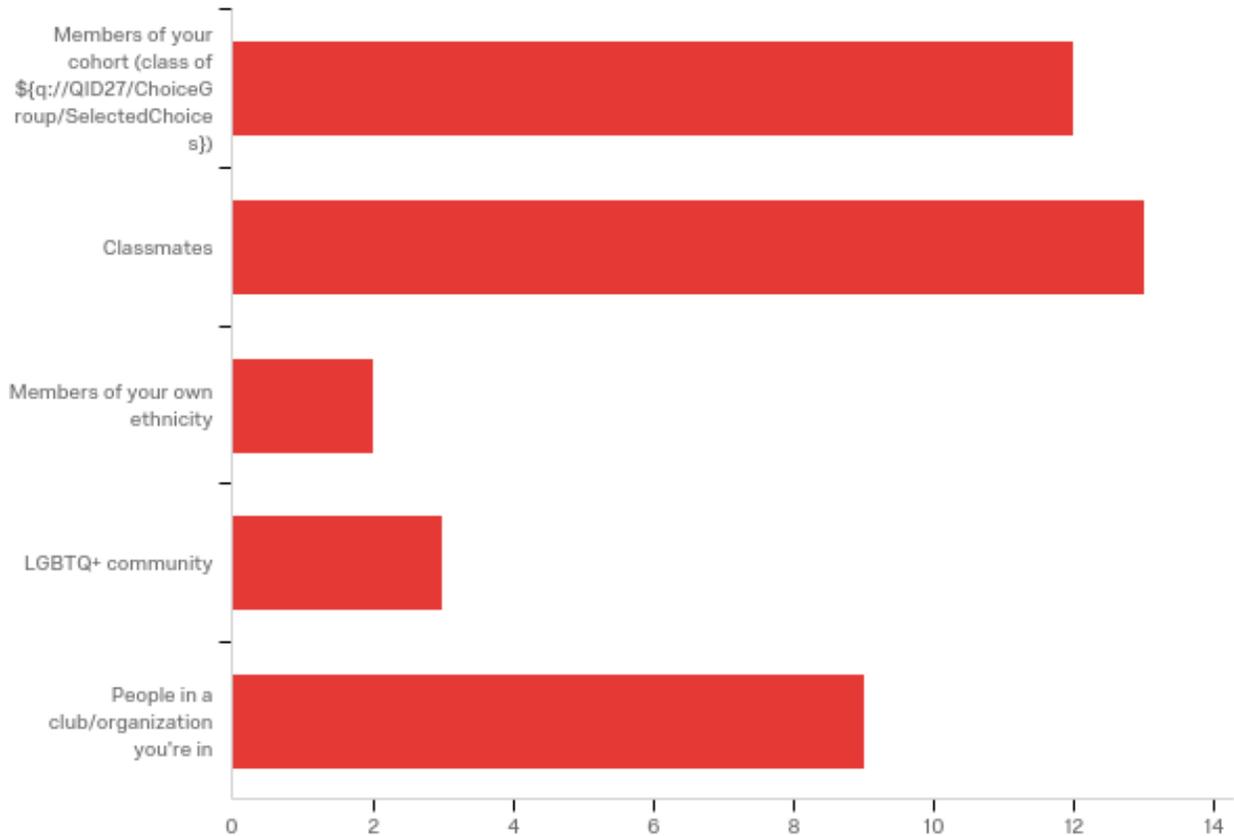
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	48.00%	12
2	Somewhat	20.00%	5
3	Neutral	4.00%	1
4	No	28.00%	7
	Total	100%	25

**Q12 - Are you friends with other students of color in the Honors College?**



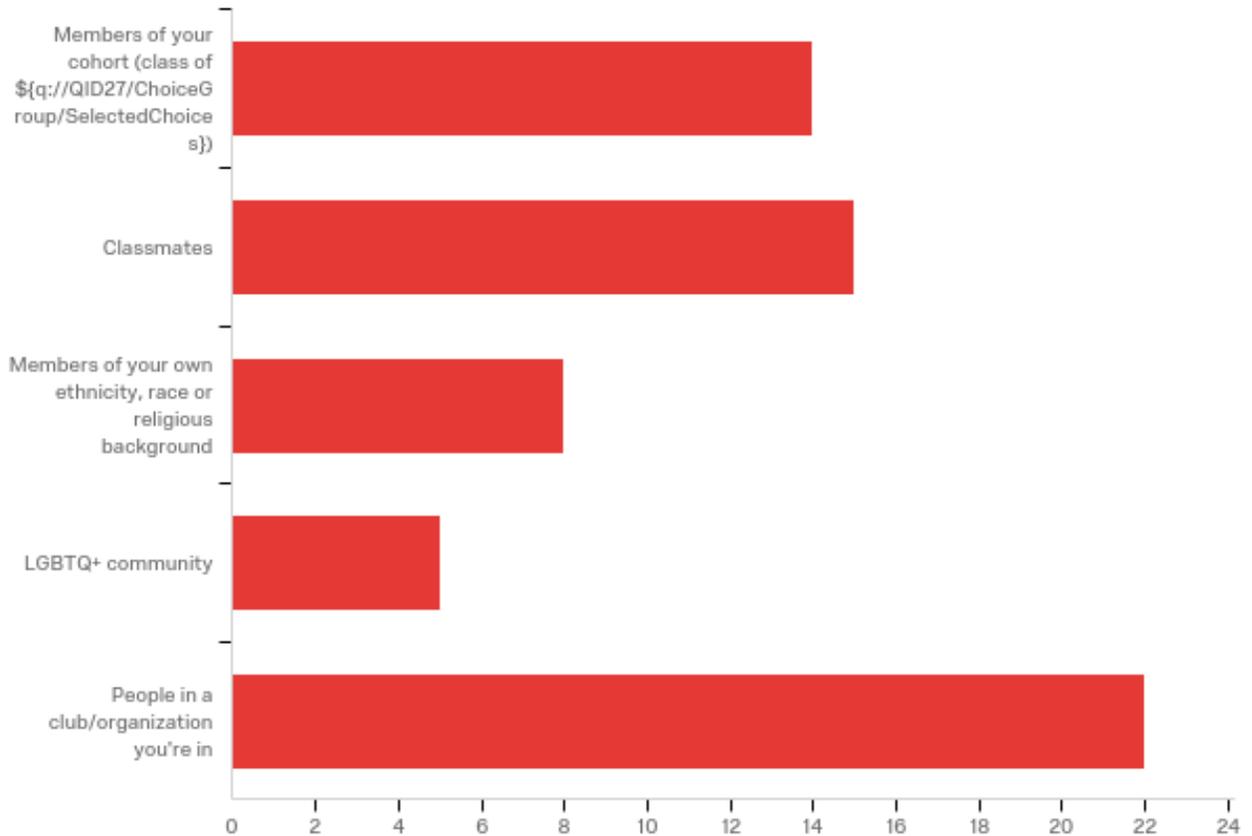
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	48.00%	12
2	No	52.00%	13
	Total	100%	25

### Q13 - What groups do you socialize/identify with in the Honors College?



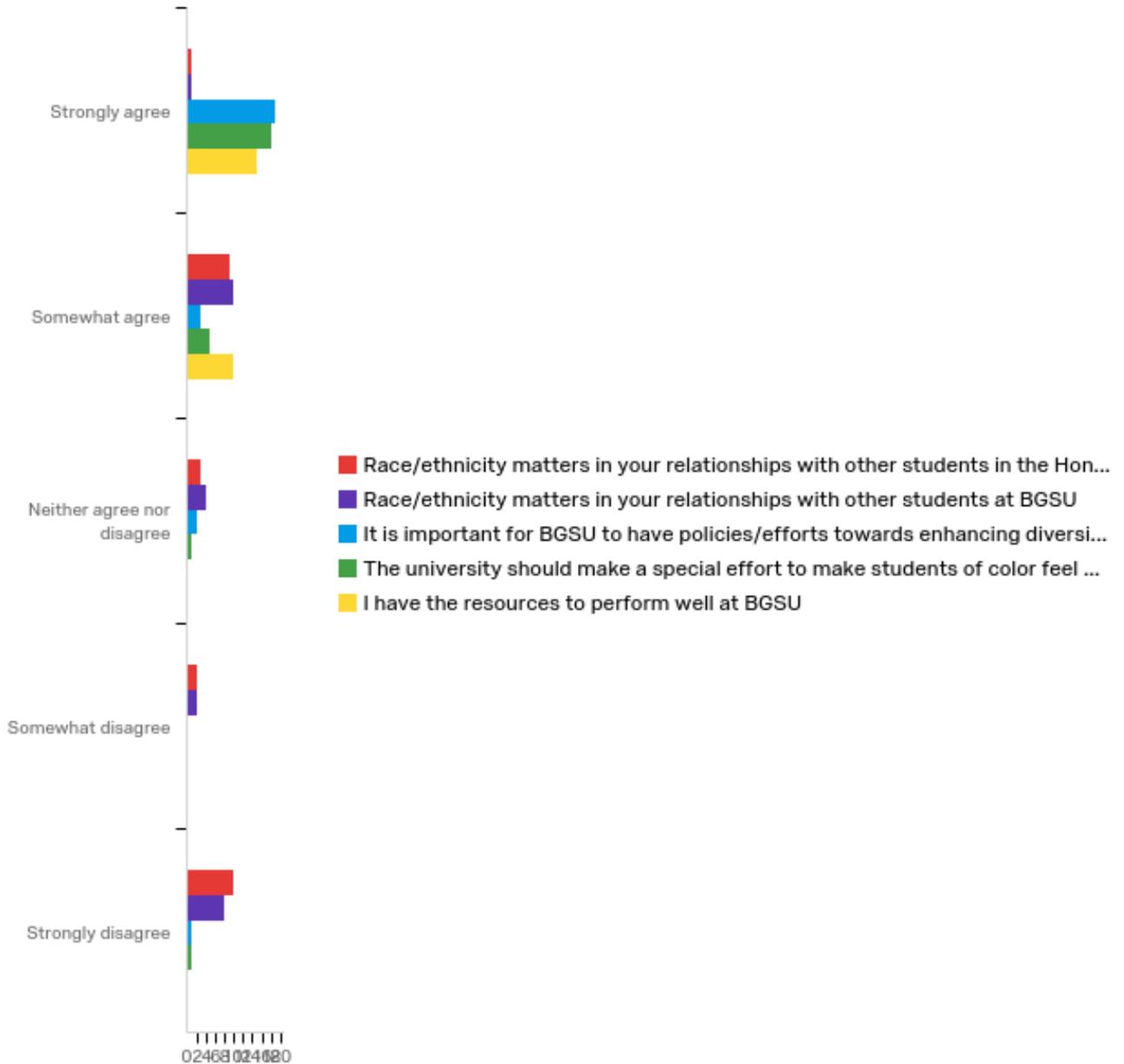
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Members of your cohort (class of \${{q://QID27/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}})	30.77%	12
2	Classmates	33.33%	13
3	Members of your own ethnicity	5.13%	2
4	LGBTQ+ community	7.69%	3
5	People in a club/organization you're in	23.08%	9
	Total	100%	39

### Q14 - What groups do you socialize/identify with at BGSU?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Members of your cohort (class of \${{q://QID27/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}})	21.88%	14
2	Classmates	23.44%	15
3	Members of your own ethnicity, race or religious background	12.50%	8
4	LGBTQ+ community	7.81%	5
5	People in a club/organization you're in	34.38%	22
	Total	100%	64

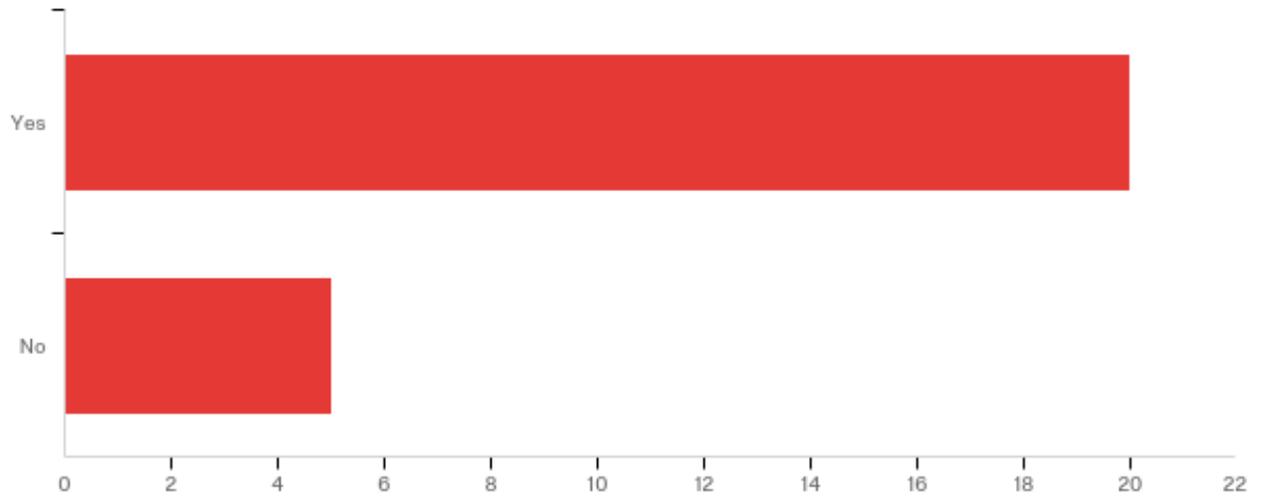
**Q15 - Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements**



#	Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	Race/ethnicity matters in your relationships	4.00% 1	36.00% 9	12.00% 3	8.00% 2	40.00% 10	25

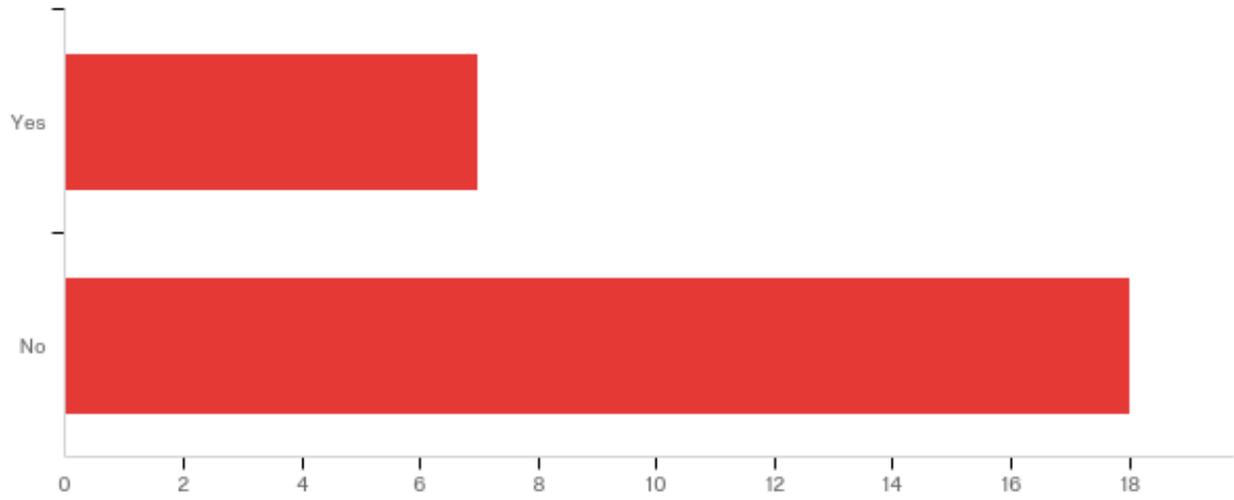
	with other students in the Honors College											
2	Race/ethnicity matters in your relationships with other students at BGSU	4.00%	1	40.00%	10	16.00%	4	8.00%	2	32.00%	8	25
3	It is important for BGSU to have policies/efforts towards enhancing diversity and inclusivity	76.00%	19	12.00%	3	8.00%	2	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	25
4	The university should make a special effort to make students of color feel they are part of the BGSU community	72.00%	18	20.00%	5	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	25
5	I have the resources to perform well at BGSU	60.00%	15	40.00%	10	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	25

**Q16 - Are you aware of any programs/events at BGSU for students of color specifically?**



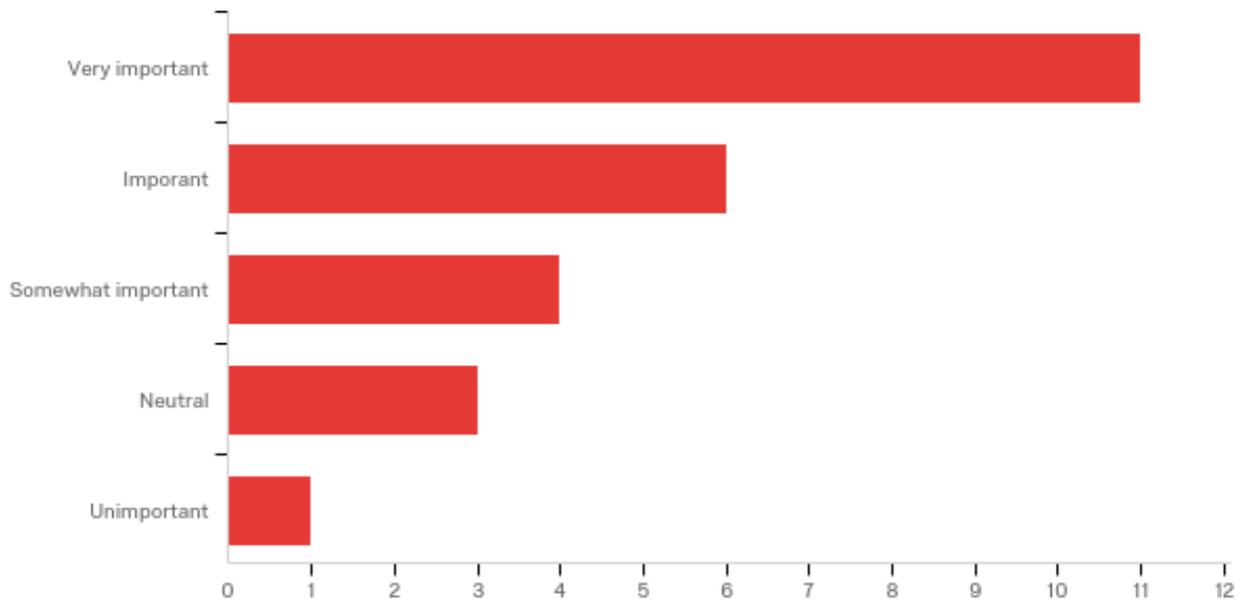
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	80.00%	20
2	No	20.00%	5
	Total	100%	25

**Q17 - Have you taken a class with a faculty of color in the Honors College?**



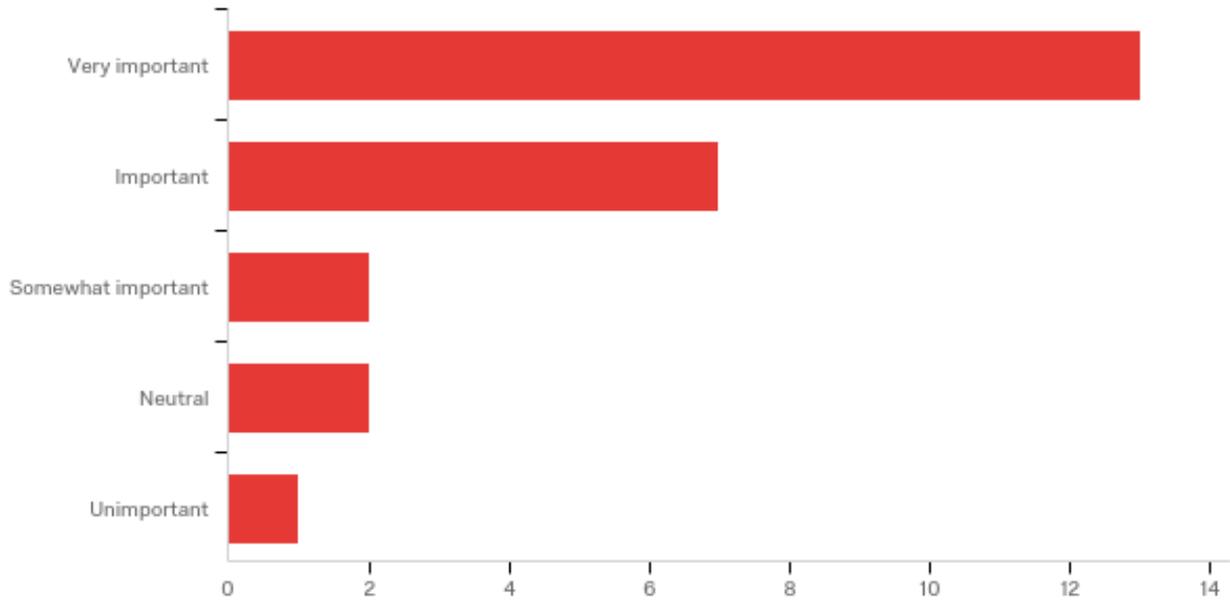
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	28.00%	7
2	No	72.00%	18
	Total	100%	25

**Q18 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color in the Honors College?**



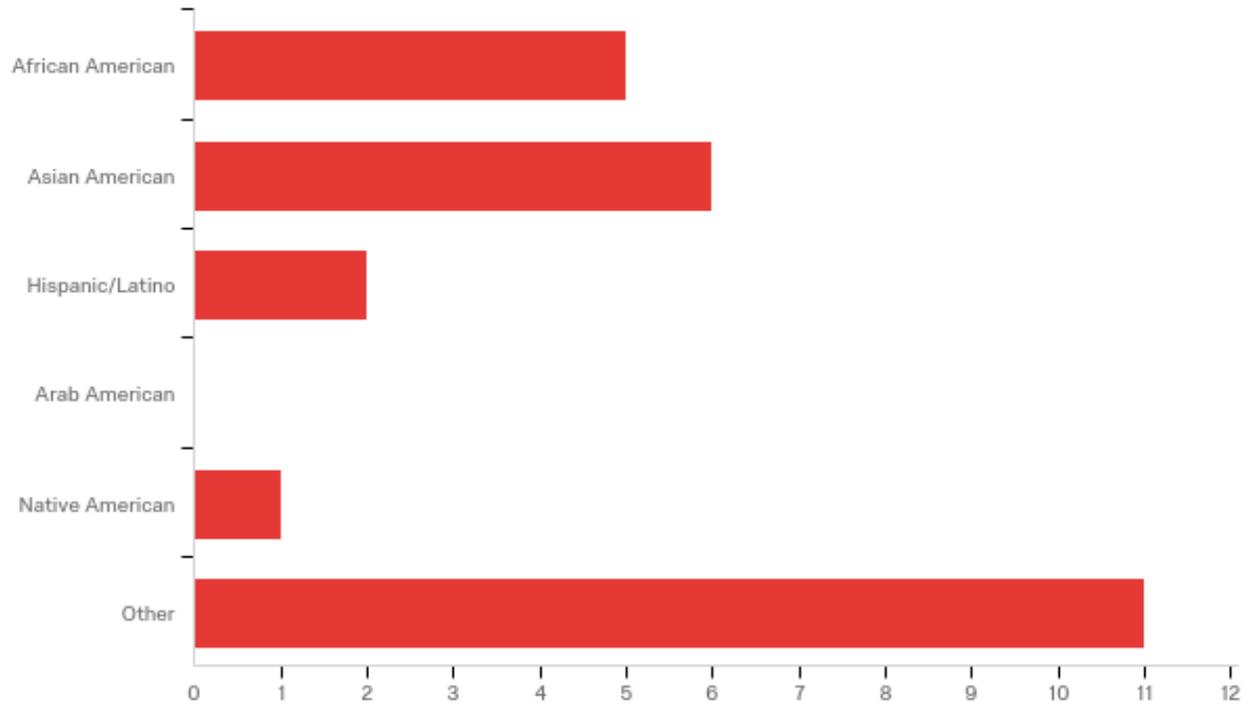
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	44.00%	11
2	Important	24.00%	6
3	Somewhat important	16.00%	4
4	Neutral	12.00%	3
5	Unimportant	4.00%	1
	Total	100%	25

**Q19 - How important do you feel it is to have faculty of color here at BGSU?**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very important	52.00%	13
2	Important	28.00%	7
3	Somewhat important	8.00%	2
4	Neutral	8.00%	2
5	Unimportant	4.00%	1
	Total	100%	25

**Q20 - What is your race/ethnicity?**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	African American	20.00%	5
2	Asian American	24.00%	6
3	Hispanic/Latino	8.00%	2
4	Arab American	0.00%	0
5	Native American	4.00%	1
6	Other	44.00%	11
	Total	100%	25

**Q21 - If you answered other to the question above, please write in your race/ethnicity below.**

If you answered other to the question above, please write in your race/ethnicity below.

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White and Hispanic

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white

---

Biracial (African American/White)

---

European American

---

Caucasian

---

Mixed -- Caribbean African and White

---

Indian American

---

White

---

Filipino and white

---

Western European

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W