Summary of October 2020 Leonhard Center Student Panel

Positive Things About this semester

So, starting with the positive, what do you think is going well this semester with your courses?
    a. Time management, increasing connections with others
    b. Everything is a lot more organized than spring
    c. Freedom and flexibility for when to watch recorded lectures/learn/do coursework
    d. Instructors asking for feedback on how the course is going

What are some things that your instructors have done to help you with your learning this semester?
    a. Instructors asking for feedback
    b. Recorded lectures – reviewing content after synchronous time or when confused
    c. Breakout rooms with same groups
    d. More use of interaction tools (polls)
    e. Access to TAs
    f. Smaller classes
    g. Individual meetings with professor (Instructor offered to have individual meetings with each student in the class)
    h. Weekly summaries – Instructor sends out a weekly summary of everything the students need to do for the course.

Questions about Specific Course Types or Instructional Styles

What strategies have your instructors used in your courses to help engage students? In other words, what have they tried to help students interact with the instructor or other students?   How do you think these have gone?
    a. Flipped format: Review videos before live sessions with problem solving in breakout rooms
        i. In Breakout groups, initially students were in random breakouts which led to less prepared group members. Later same breakout rooms were used each session and group members came more prepared.
    b. Starting class with a discussion of "life" and how things are going
    c. One faculty member asked if students would share their opinion on **icebreakers** and for suggestions on what to do. In general students liked icebreakers, but one mentioned that, in their experience, what works depends on class size. For large classes, polls in Zoom, Canvas or Poll Everywhere work well (fun questions, not necessarily related to the course). Active discussion worked best in smaller classes.

What advice do you have for faculty on how to handle students' camera usage?
    a. If the course focused on discussion, then students are more likely to use their camera, but if the course is more lecture-focused, then students are less likely to use their camera as they don't feel it is needed

b. Students felt influenced by others – so if no one else had their camera on, then they wouldn't turn their camera on; but if some folks did have their cameras on, then they were more likely to turn their camera on.
c. If instructor asks for students to turn on their camera, they are more likely to turn it on
d. "Called people out and required it", not the right approach
e. Leaving their camera off can help students focus by removing some elements of distraction

Did you have any group or team projects this semester? If so, how have these gone this semester? Do you have suggestions on how group or team projects can be improved?
a. Instructor should put students into groups
b. Can be harder to get people together virtually

Do you have any lab courses this semester? If so, how have these gone this semester? Do you have any suggestions on how labs, in the format your course is in, can be improved?
a. Tend to be longer (with an in-person option)
  i. Hard to sit through 2-hours of sitting at a screen
  ii. Middle of the day deadlines are tough, especially with a team element
b. Extra PPE for in-person labs but it is worth it!

Let's briefly talk about course assignments, like homework and quizzes. How have these been this semester? Has it been more challenging or difficult to complete homeworks or quizzes?
a. Sometimes it is hard to find everything in Canvas
  i. Organization issues
  ii. What do I need to know when? Weekly summaries are very helpful!
b. Less engagement, especially without teams, makes thing harder
c. "Random" assignment due dates are more challenging vs one regular/reoccurring one
d. (In)ability to communicate via Zoom is affecting grades
  i. Help with homework sets is challenging – try using breakout rooms
  ii. Office hours showing pen/paperwork with TA is a challenge
  Suggestion from faculty participant is to have students log onto Zoom both on their computer and on their phone, so the phone can act as a document camera. Not ideal, but can help
e. Overall, everything feels like more work/overload
  i. Lots of "self-teaching" and it adds to stress during weeks with multiple deliverables, and learning on your own
  ii. Harder to ask questions during class, so the answer comes too late and then you have to more work on your own.

Have you heard of any of your classmates having challenging getting access to the hardware (computer, phone) needed to be successful in their classes?
a. One who had friend with broken camera – made uploading work on paper during an exam nearly impossible.
b. Stress that tech may break – what do I do if my computer breaks?

    c. Tech advantage if you have digital tablet
    d. Stress about upload – Timed exam uploads are stressful. Wifi is not always as reliable as you want it to be and can crash during exams (which is frustrating and stressful)

What is your experience using third party platforms (like GroupMe) to connect with other students in your class?

    a. Invaluable to ask questions to other students and make connections – especially as a junior who is new to their major
    b. Hasn't led to AI issues; more discussion of approaches rather than answers
    c. Post exam submission debrief.

Challenging Things:

Relating to your courses, what has been the most challenging thing about this semester?
    a. Overwhelmed → up everyday at 6AM! Very long workdays to get everything done
    b. Difficult time to study and find a job (as a senior)
        i. Motivation has been tough
    c. Disengagement as a junior - it has been hard to find friends in major
    d. Zoom fatigue (taking 7 courses, all remote-synchronous in Zoom): everything is alone; everyone agrees
        i. Managing Health: back hurts, headaches
    e. Keeping engagement, find internships. Week 8 and it is getting to be a lot

What do you wish faculty would stop doing with remote instruction?
    a. Do peer exam reviews
    b. Empathy for their situations → "I'm doing college from parents' basement"; increase communication
    c. Note-taking guides to help make lecture engaging
    d. Know where your students are and adjust accordingly