

Bowdoin College

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2021

### Reflections questionnaire response by Anonymous on March 23, 2021

Anonymous

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#### Recommended Citation

Anonymous, "Reflections questionnaire response by Anonymous on March 23, 2021" (2021). *Bowdoin Stories*. 24.

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Respondent



117:03  
Time to complete



1. Name - please select "anonymous" or enter your name in the "other" field. \*

Anonymous

2. What is your relationship to Bowdoin? \*

Student

Faculty

Staff

Alumni

3. If applicable, what is your Bowdoin class year?

4. Has your connection to Bowdoin changed during the pandemic? If so, how?

Yes. I am teaching in person and thus subject to higher risk and anxieties than other faculty who are safe in their homes. The administration has failed to recognize these differences and make adjustments, they have often unnecessarily added to the stress and risk. The pandemic has revealed more clearly their inherent indifference to faculty well being.

5. What has it been like to teach/learn/work remotely/continue to work in person?

The demands on faculty time have grown exponentially, while support staff are hardly available. The most burdensome is the unending inflow of email seven days a week, including messages from administrators on Sundays. On the plus side, teaching online can be more effective because nobody is wearing a mask so it is easier to interact.

6. Who and what comforted you during this time? What has sustained you?

Family, of course. An appreciation of the small things in life such as newly baked bread. Online shopping and delivery!

7. What is one thing you created or learned during the last year?

I wrote two articles. I learned that full engagement with external events is not conducive to individual happiness.

8. What have been your social connections in this time of physical isolation?

My social connections are largely unchanged: family, a few close friends, my neighbors. Everyone has been forced to behave like an introvert, so introverts have an advantage in the current culture.

9. Which moments will you remember? What would you like to forget?

Teaching under a tent! I don't want to forget any experiences; it's impossible to fully appreciate the good without the bad.

10. If you'd known that you'd be so isolated for so long, what might you have done differently?

I would have engaged more with an elderly friend who did not survive the pandemic.

11. Have you had COVID-19 and/or have you been vaccinated against COVID-19? What was that like?

No on both counts.

12. Several significant news events have occurred during the pandemic, including the antiracist uprising, the U.S. presidential election, and the insurrection at the Capitol. Was your experience of these events impacted by the pandemic? If so, how?

The simultaneity of all these events undermined my sense of American exceptionalism. We have two countries and two cultures, even in acknowledging the dangers of a fatal virus. Universities should be working to integrate and overcome these schisms; unfortunately, they seem bent on exacerbating the divide.

13. What are the challenges you are currently facing?

Trying to decide when to confront institutional inadequacy and when to just let it go. Wondering whether I want to continue at Bowdoin, a small world that has become markedly smaller.

14. If you are self-isolating with family, how is that impacting your experience?

Work has always been a barrier to family engagement and the pandemic increased those demands. But I certainly appreciate my family more and have now committed to carving out a greater space for them.

15. What are you most looking forward to, when pandemic-related restrictions have been lifted? Do you think your post-pandemic life will be different from your pre-pandemic life? In what ways?

Travel, meeting my sisters. I think campuses will not be as open as before. Faculty will face greater scrutiny and limitations, which will constrain our freedoms, including challenges to freedom of speech.

16. What do you think you will remember most about this time? What would you like people in the future to understand about your current experience?

The two most valuable assets of an academic life were stripped away: personal interactions and the ability to experience other places and other cultures. A lesson to learn for the future is that technology is not progress unless it facilitates direct human interactions.

17. This space is for any reflections you'd like to put here. (4000 character limit)

As Voltaire noted, when the world is in chaos the best we can do is to cultivate our own garden, and the most rewarding aspect of the current crisis is the opportunity to engage with my students. The attraction of being at Bowdoin has always been the caliber of students, and I feel the sense of community in my classes is stronger as we confront these challenges together.

18. By checking the box below, you agree to allow your answers to be added to the Documenting Bowdoin & COVID-19 archive of the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives and made available openly and permanently online. \*

I agree to the above terms.