padlet

{On Belonging:} - A Student-led Open Dialogue

What are YOUR thoughts on belonging in the University? We want to hear what belonging means to you. Share your thoughts with us on this collaborative Padlet board! // [Your contributions will be shared on our upcoming website in the future, but your identity will remain hidden. You don't need to type your names unless you want to be identified! :)]

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Student Sharing Summary (Read-only)

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1. What makes you feel like you belong/not belong in HKUST

- **Deevansh:** part of many student associations
  - Communication → f2f communication plays a major role in "belonging"
  - Communication has been a major challenge, especially with the pandemic

- **Michelle Neoh:** changing from a high-schooler to an undergrad → found it challenging to redefine herself
  - Her initial solution: assimilating into different groups with false personas → confusing conformity with belonging
  - Turning point: Realizing her passion for activism exceeds her anxiety of what people perceive of her → unbelongingness roots from the self, and not necessarily the environment

- **Isabel:** Meeting people en route who face similar challenges - it's easy to feel connected and accepted when you find people who are similar to you

- **Alexis:** Not born and raised in HK, she was afraid of leaving of the campus at first -> HKUST has provided her with a platform to meet like-minded peers -> less panicky/nervous -> could utilise resources in HKUST and be productive with them

2. Experiences that make you feel like you are belonging/unbelonging in HKUST
- **Deevansh:** there is inconsistencies among different "pillars" of the university, especially regarding how people from different backgrounds and communities are treated

- **Michelle:** being freerode by all her groupmates and having her issues neglected by her instructor → invalidation and unwelcoming
  - Questions of belongingness: "Am I asking too much from the community?" "Are my thoughts accepted? Am I safe to express myself?" → especially for minorities

- **Alexis:** my experience as a student ambassador → sharing her experiences as a HKUST student to highschoolers
  - When she was reflecting on her time in HKUST: it made her realize that she was representing a group of people, and that majorly shapes her identity

- **Isabel:** Finding similarities between her and other local Hong Kong student → since she is a "local HK-er" it poses a form of privilege for her to find accompaniment with greater ease compared to students from other backgrounds
  - Lack of f2f contact: makes me wonder whether HKUST is just an online learning platform like Coursera, and this lack of physical presence and social connection has hindered her sense of belonging

- **Shrav:** As a former leader of Humans of HKUST → the goal is to break down the barricades that stop people from understanding what "belonging" means

3. How do your plural belonging(s) intersect with one another in HKUST?

- **Michelle Neoh:** She was a local student before Year 10 → international school → transitioned to HKUST
  - Intersections of identities that are thought to be mutually exclusive, but aren't: Michelle thought she was "local" but she didn't fully fit in with the HKUST local community → bordering "non-local" and "local"

- **Deevansh:** Lots of local and non-local friends
  - Communication is not dictated by one's background necessarily, but intersecting key interests (e.g. startup community → belonging to the concept of "entreprenuership")
- **Isabel:** Being a HK local, her belonging to HKUST also intersects with her belonging to the city (take what she learned from HKUST to give back to the city)
- **Alexis:** Finding common ground between where she is in and where she was from → self-diversification

Breakout Room Voices (Click [+] to start posting)

When do you feel belong (room 6)

When my voice is being heard (Tina)

belonging

there are many things the Uni can do to get more students to feel that belonging

Students learn virtually (Room 6)

Simon: If students can get back to face-to-face classes, it can improve the sense of belongings. An example, in a previous class when I worked in group, all the group mates didn't turn the videos on, it is difficult to build up a sense of belonging to the group.

Identifying with a major/subject of study. Stereotypes associated with those studying a certain subject

Post Graduate Experience

It's more difficult as the majority of the people are UG and it's quite hard to integrate into the community. Language is also a barrier in feeling like one belongs in a place.

Room 1: On Trust

Trust is the foundation of communication and what it means to belong (we ran out of time)

Belonging for non-english speakers (Room 5)

Belonging for those who do not speak english, those introverted by their lack of fluency in english, becomes a little more difficult. They find it difficult to join societies, those fluent in mandarin end up having only some mainland friends, find it difficult to mingle with other students.
Being introverted could even perhaps be a situational introvertedness; One might be very outgoing but when having to speak a second or third language ones confidence drains away.

Group size

i think the way were so happy to talk to each other in the small group shows that we can get a stronger sense of belonging when we are together in small groups

Room 4

The interaction with people will build up strong sense of belonging of certain place
Also the language people use will also be important in the sense of belonging

Room 1: Factors that influence trust

Belonging to the same age group and generations have a big influence in how people trust their peers. That is probably because some things are a lot more understandable by peers who have had exposure to similar discussions

Room 3

- Huge potential for improvement at HKUST for developing a sense of belonging earlier
- Some things done by HKUST were there to help intercultural understanding but some were also barriers
- Language was the biggest barrier e.g. hard to join organizations and spawn potentially hostile environments
- Strict infrastructure e.g. forcing international students to stay with local students was counterproductive in the end
- Need to test these infrastructures before actually putting them in place
- Smaller groups definitely bring in a better dynamic and an easier environment for sharing of ideas

If there is a Chance to talk or chat with students and teachers, maybe that will be helpful to know more and more students and students may know teachers as well. And to know each other may be a small step for belonging. Because we are not alone. We have people who can talk or chat in HKUST.

Belonging to a major/school

In the breakout room we discussed that students in HKUST often very strongly identify with their school or major. And it tends to be correlated with the difficulty/quota of getting a specific major. While it is good to be passionate about your interests, I do find that there is too much of a linkage to the major and the person. I think this also may be due to a lack of associating yourself with other activities or qualities. Students in HKUST often prioritise studies so highly that it leads to quite an uneven work-life balance. Then it is only natural to associate yourself and a large part of your identity to your studies. Perhaps HKUST communication (emails, initiatives, opportunities) could be more well rounded beyond majors/studies/internships and encourage people to engage in more things not as an extracurricular, but as an equal priority.

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