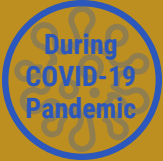


The Value of the Labor Program and Labor Supervisors During the Pandemic



NOTE: Definitions of all categories can be found [here](#).

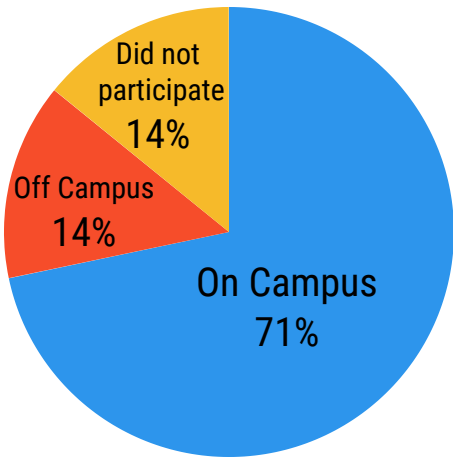
In February, 469 Berea College students responded to a survey sent to all enrolled students. Its purpose was to understand if and how participation in the Labor Program may have contributed to students' health, well-being, and safety during the pandemic. We created this project in collaboration with the Work Colleges Consortium (seven other Work Colleges).

I have highlighted some of the Berea findings below. Please let me know if you have questions or reactions.

Thank you,

Judith Weckman, Director
 Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Survey Respondents' Participation in the Labor Program in Fall 2020



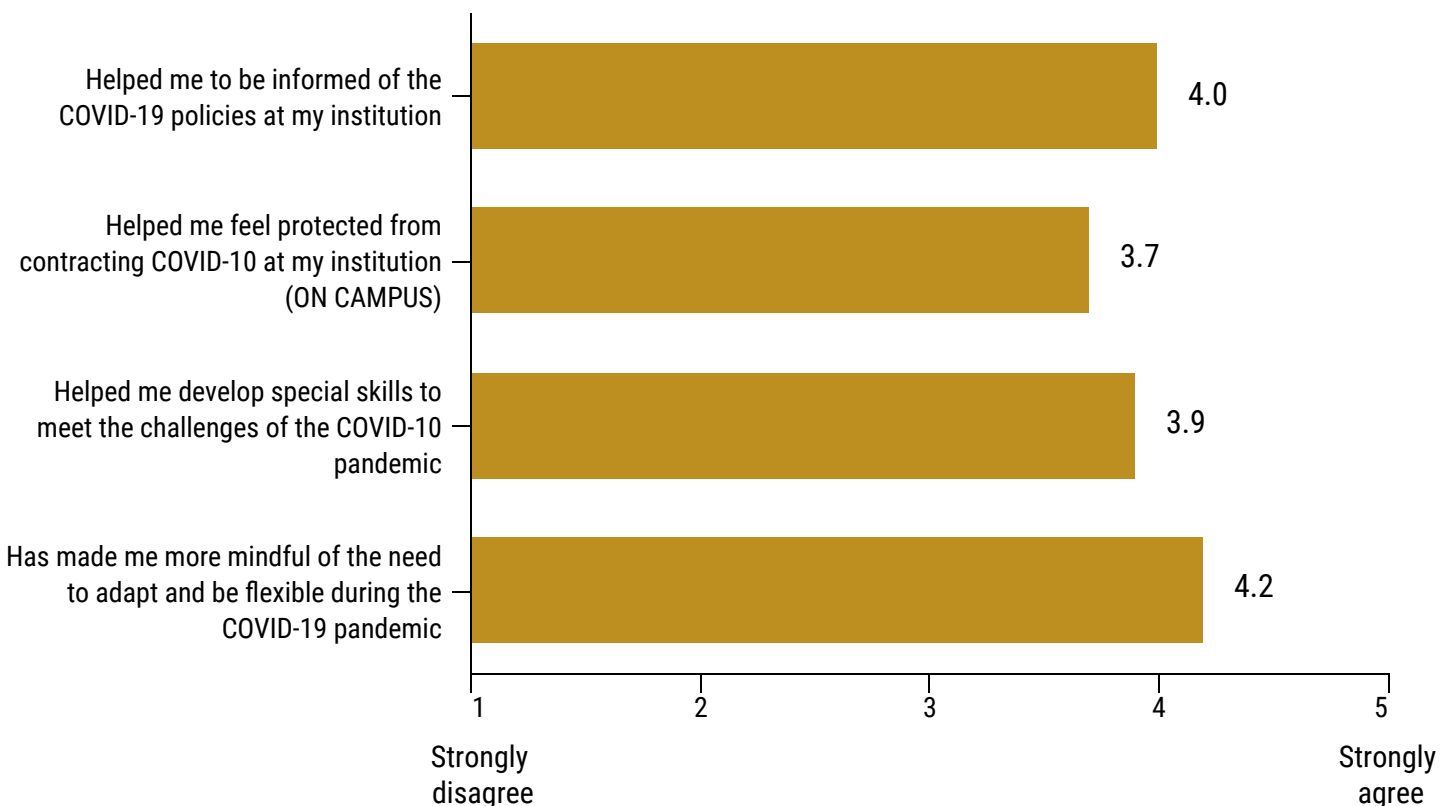
How has your participation in the Labor Program helped you handle the challenges you have faced on campus during the time of COVID-19?

The most common comments were about how labor helped:

- relieve financial and emotion stress
- alleviate loneliness and increase connection with others
- create opportunities to go outside and get out of one's room
- provide a sense of stability and familiarity
- teach how to sanitize and protect against COVID-19

A few students commented that labor made the situation more stressful (it was too much to do).

Participating in the Labor Program during the Fall semester 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic)...



Over 40% of the survey respondents indicated that there was **something specific about participation in the Labor Program that helped limit the spread of COVID-19 on campus**. The most common explanations related to a sense of duty to the community, strict rules about masks and social distancing, and general accountability. Following are some illustrative examples.

Working at Berea College has given me a sense of pride and community. Due to the pandemic, people are hesitant about going out, so making me friends has not been easy. With work I have been able to network, but also gain mentors who help both professionally but also academically.

Maybe it cuts down on the disconnected or adversarial relationship between college and students that exists at most colleges. Maybe working here makes us feel like the college is ours, rather than a customer buying a service. Maybe we take care of our own house better, so to speak.

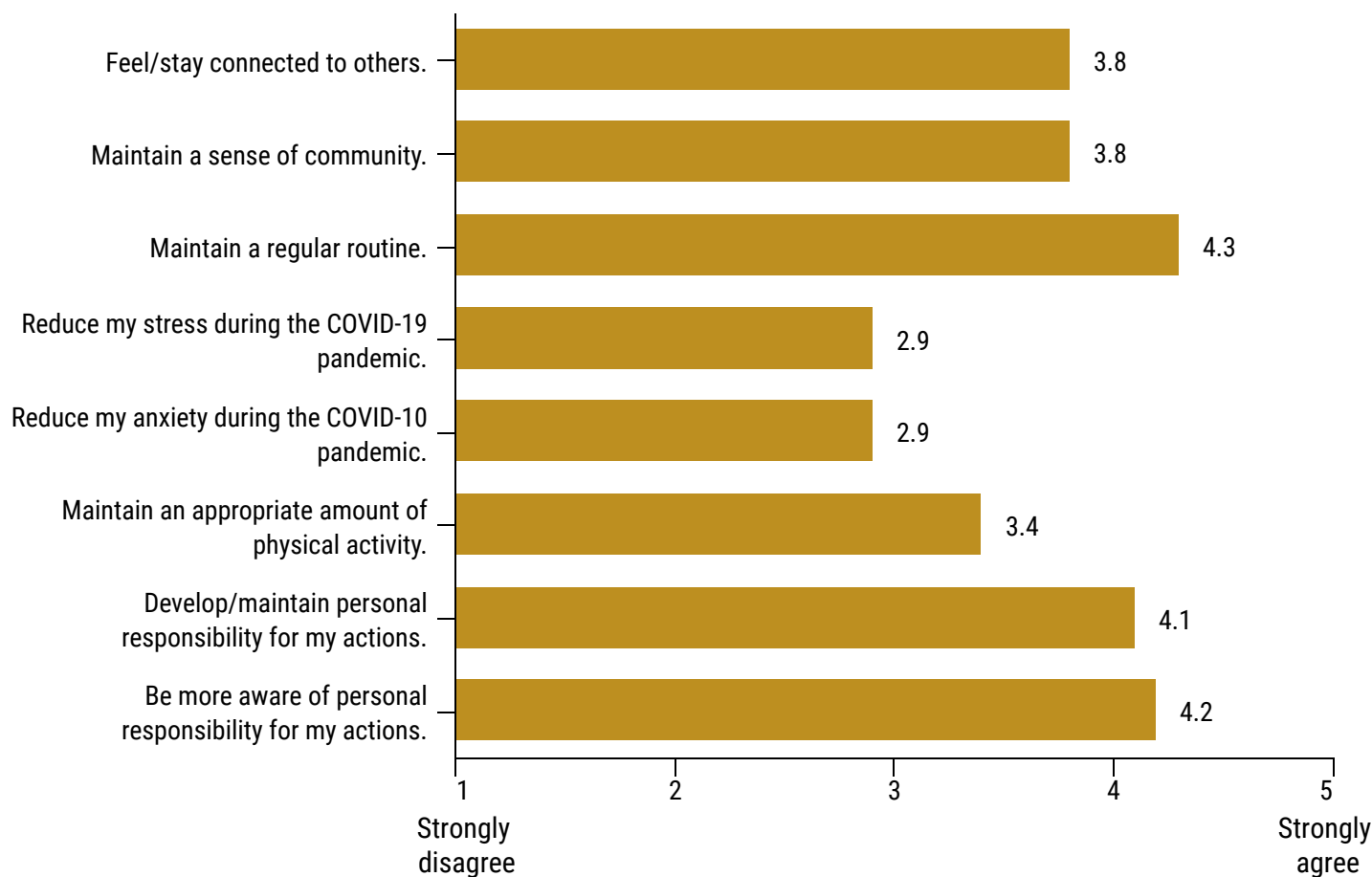
I think the work program teaches us that we are a community and thus, we have to take care of each other. In my labor experience, I have learned that we need to work together to make the college run and that is what happened last fall; students understood that in order for us to remain open for the semester during a global pandemic, we had to work together by wearing masks and following all the protocols.

I think it is the awareness of interconnectedness in community and the contributions each individual makes that has helped prevent COVID cases from increasing on work college campuses. I also think the need to adapt to new restrictions in order to continue working and therefore continue studying has increased the health and safety of the campus community as well as individuals' tolerance for college policies.

We were all holding each other accountable for the health and cleanliness we maintained on campus. Each and every one of us tried to make life as easy as we could for each other since it was already so hard. Following rules at work and taking each job seriously is what maintained this college free from any student COVID outbreaks.

Rather than people being afraid it helps them keep going with life and working. Not all jobs can be done remotely but knowing how to work safely and see people helps students thrive. Being able to keep each other accountable.

Thinking about the Fall Semester 2020, participating in the Labor Program helped me...



Has your labor supervisor helped you handle the challenges you have faced during the time of COVID-19?

With only a few exceptions, the most common comments included references to:

- being flexible about scheduling
- being emotionally supportive
- providing information
- enforcing strict COVID-19 regulations

Some illustrative comments:

My supervisor made sure there was a sense of community in the workplace, so dealing with the Covid-19 regulations on campus didn't feel as isolating.

Been a supporting role and a listening ear for hardships through this time of Covid-19.

My supervisor was more than understanding and was constantly offering many kinds of help for me and my coworkers.

We got to de-stress at labor meetings through fun games!