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SUBJECT: Freshman Isolation Leads to Poor School Environment

Isolation. Loneliness. Remoteness. These are the feelings experienced by many of the incoming freshmen students at City College of New York. Although these issues have arose worldwide because of the pandemic, I have observed and noted that these are caused by the systematic flaws of how the CCNY campus is set up and how the college fosters that type of atmosphere for its students.

First of all, I have found that the main issue of this sense of isolation between the undergraduate students at CCNY, especially the freshmen, is caused by a lack of enforcement of an atmosphere for students on campus. For example, other colleges throughout NY and the United States require that freshman live on campus for, at least, the first year of their college. This ensures that these students participate in activities on campus. Not only that, but it helps create a sense of community within the college that the students are comfortable to be part of no matter what. Having students living on campus for the first year would allow for students to establish connections between one another, the staff, and professors at campus. This is what brings value to the college experience, building connections and forming relationships with others. At CCNY, however, I have always felt that there is a lack of communication and isolation present between students on campus because students are not required to live on campus.

From my personal experience at CCNY, another factor that leads to the isolation present within the atmosphere is the fact that professors rarely assign group-oriented assignments that encourage student communication. During my first semester at CCNY, as a freshman, I was never assigned any work that inspires communication between me and other students, even in my Freshman Composition class.

Isolation leads to further isolation. Students that often start out lonely in their first year of college, stay lonely throughout the rest of their college experience. Lonely individuals often adopt “phenotypic hypersensitivity to social threats and self-centered behavior”ⁱ (Lieberz, 2021) as a defense mechanism. It is a viscous cycle that leads to a worse situation than the one that is experienced by the individual; a student that is lonely does not talk to others, keeping him isolated, and since he is isolated, he would not talk to others. Loneliness and isolation often lead to an unhealthy life in general. Therefore, it is essential for students to understand the dangers of this issue.

As a college, it is important to address these problems and to strive to solve the issue of student isolation. It is vital that students interact with each other, and to foster an environment that encourages such communication. Through on-campus dorms and requirements to live there for the first year along with an increase of group-oriented assignments for students, these are the first

steps that should be taken by CCNY to address the issue of isolation that is plaguing the beautiful campus of this college.

¹ Lieberz, J., Shamay-Tsoory, S. G., Saporta, N., Esser, T., Kuskova, E., Stoffel-Wagner, B., Hurlemann, R., & Scheele, D. (2021). Loneliness and the Social Brain: How Perceived Social Isolation Impairs Human Interactions. *Advanced Science*, 8(21), 2102076. <https://doi.org/10.1002/advs.202102076>