



VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE FACULTY AND STUDENTS
REFLECT ON THEIR ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

NOVEMBER 2022

The Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration is the current degree program offered through Morehouse College Online, an initiative that intends to expand programming to more industry-relevant concentrations and other majors in the coming years. The current program prioritizes the adult returning student who has 15 or more credit hours, including many former Morehouse College students who started but did not finish the traditional program. Faculty and administrators view the increased accessibility of this program as a way to drive more equitable student outcomes, aligning with the college's vision as:

“the premier liberal arts college in the world attracting and educating Black men and other men who share the values of Morehouse College”



Morehouse College faculty and students seek connection and quality in their online teaching and learning experiences.

- Faculty and students embrace opportunities to connect as individuals with shared heritage, routinely delving into conversations about race and identity that uplift and inspire.
- Students expect the online program experience to enable deep learning that will advance their careers. Faculty expect to deliver courses matching the quality of their on-campus classes.

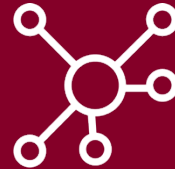
Morehouse students value opportunities for ongoing dialogue and connection as well as peer and faculty guidance as they work toward credential completion.



DIALOGUE




GUIDANCE



CONNECTION



EQUITY



The online program enables Morehouse students to hold critical conversations, including dialogue about race, identity, and culture.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON CROWN FORUM COURSE:

"I think it's been very good to learn about some influential people in the space of just Black excellence and Black professionalism."

"It keeps me balanced as a student ... there was actually an interview with Andre Leon Talley that we had, and we actually got to speak to him. ... The opportunity to have those types of chances, is like 'Man!' ... [Our professor] has done such a great job and he's invested so much into it, and it's been so beneficial."

STUDENT REFLECTION ON THE MOREHOUSE EXPERIENCE COURSE:

"There were not a lot of conversations [when previously at a predominantly white school] that were centered around my Blackness. So I feel a part when I sit in a class and hear a professor that looks like my father, looks like my grandfather, and they're able to give me the history of the trials that were turned into triumphs."





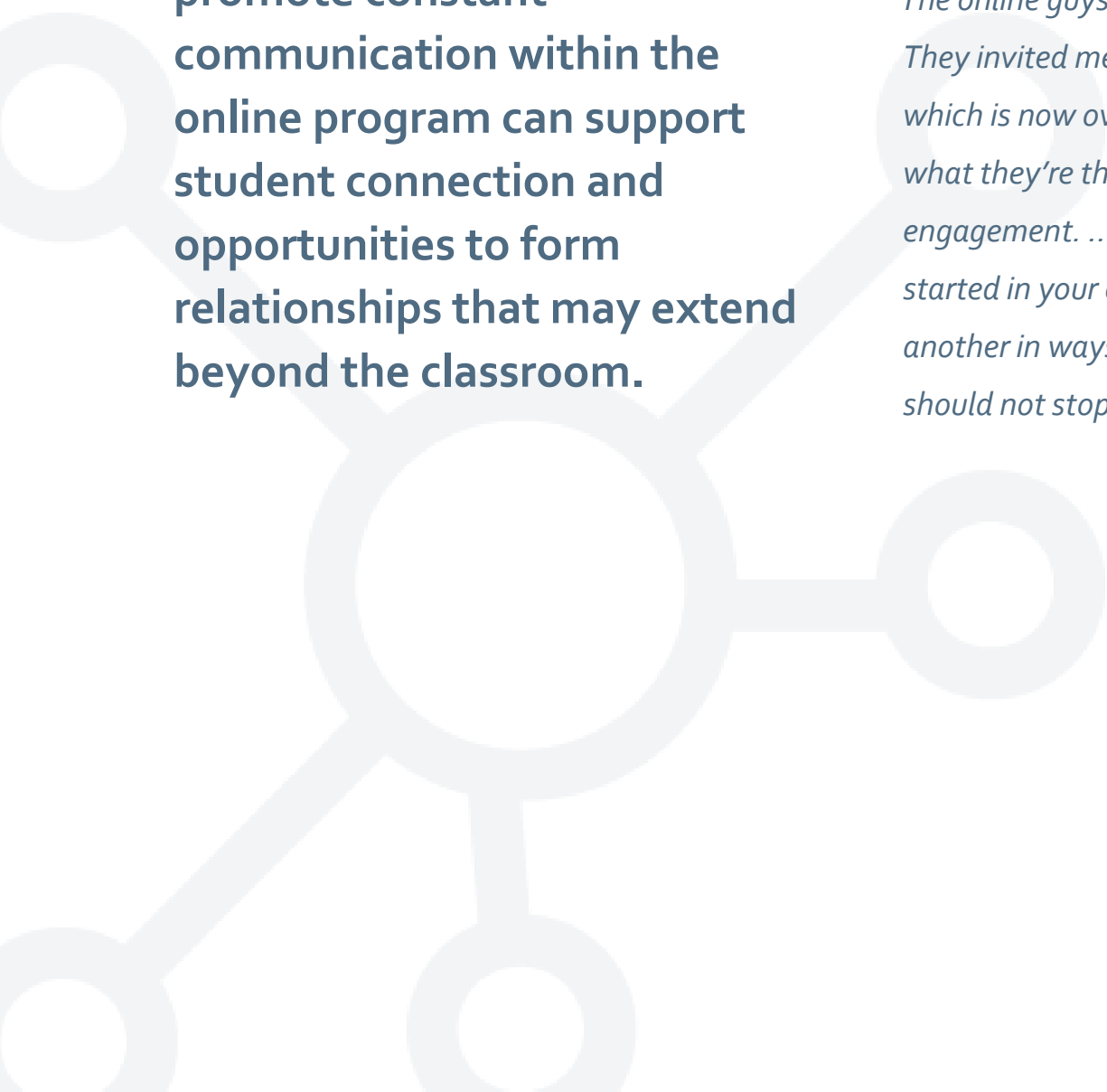
Students value mentorship and guidance from experienced peers to supplement the advice of academic advisors as they progress through the program.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON MENTORSHIP AND GUIDANCE:

"I have several study partners, and they've had classes that I'm taking. So I can ask them [questions]. I think that's something that's really important, is just having somebody. I always try to tell [other students], 'Find somebody that's taking the course, because it's almost like them guiding you.'"

"My biggest advice is to reach out to the guys that have already been in this program. And I do hope that's something that they [the institution] will do, that they make a call list of brothers that are deeper in the programs so that they can advise guys that are just coming in."




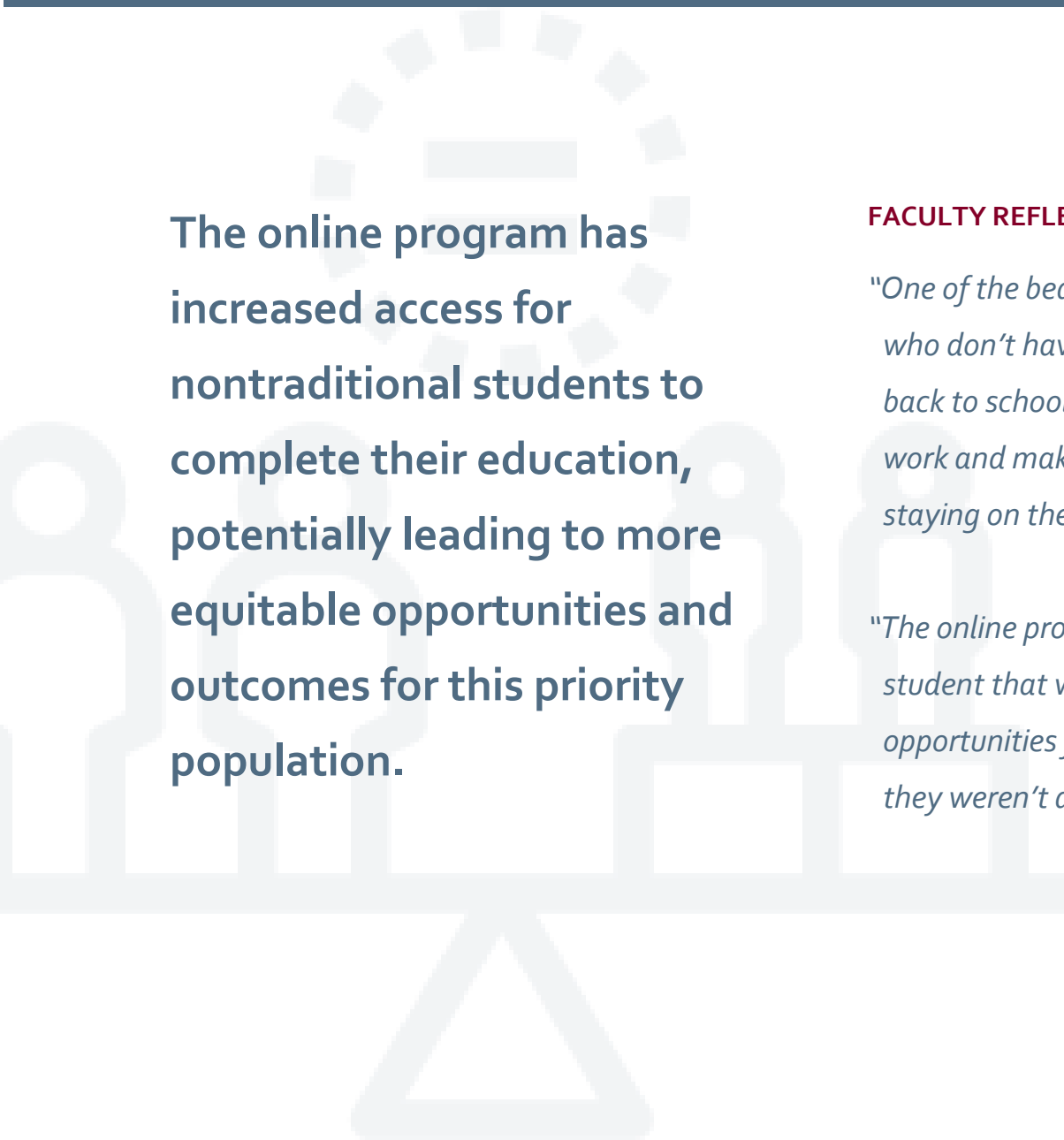


Integrating elements that promote constant communication within the online program can support student connection and opportunities to form relationships that may extend beyond the classroom.

FACULTY REFLECTION ON CONNECTIVITY:

"The online guys have a GroupMe [which is student-managed]. They invited me, and I sit there, every day since my class started, which is now over a year. They sign on in the mornings and say what they're thankful for. And this is an outcome of our engagement. ... Their point was, 'We want to continue what was started in your class, and we want to always be here for one another in ways that we know we aren't in person, but that should not stop us from being here.'"





The online program has increased access for nontraditional students to complete their education, potentially leading to more equitable opportunities and outcomes for this priority population.

FACULTY REFLECTIONS ON ACCESS AND EQUITY:

"One of the beauties of online education is that it allows people, who don't have the time or the finances to quit their job, to go back to school. It allows them to hold their spot, continue going to work and making money and taking care of family and self, and staying on the path in terms of their career."

"The online program is a great program in the sense that the student that wanted to come back and get it—it provides opportunities for Black men to finish up their education [when] they weren't able to do it before."



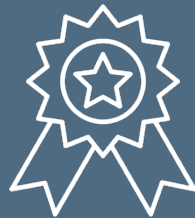
Morehouse faculty value ongoing support and inclusion in the planning and implementation of the program. They strive to deliver high-quality online academic content and activities.



SUPPORT



INCLUSION



QUALITY

Morehouse faculty appreciate many of the existing teaching supports available to them, including training and feedback loops. They see a need for increased responsiveness from the online platform manager.

FACULTY REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING SUPPORT:

"I do believe that feedback loops have been a part of the process. There have been a couple of meetings scheduled because faculty have been frustrated, and so it just required a meeting. It required conversation with the platform management company. ... Our provost has been open in listening to us share challenges, opportunities, and wins."

"Support has been offered, but I do think we have some gaps in that area in terms of our platform manager support."

Faculty expressed that they'd benefit from earlier involvement and integration into the design and selection of the learning management system (LMS) provided by the vendor and more representation and voice in decision making for other elements of the program.

FACULTY REFLECTIONS ON INCLUSION:

"Knowing the online teaching environment, knowing several LMSs and knowing my colleagues, it would've been helpful to have those kinds of conversations early on, where you hear from someone on the inside [faculty] saying 'This is not the LMS for our group at this time.'"

"Best practice moving forward needs to be partner with your faculty ... Find out where their gaps are, and what their interests are, what LMS they are comfortable with. Show them different LMSs, give them time to play around and experience it. And then you make decisions about [LMS and other elements]. You have to make sure that [faculty] are well-equipped, comfortable, and satisfied."

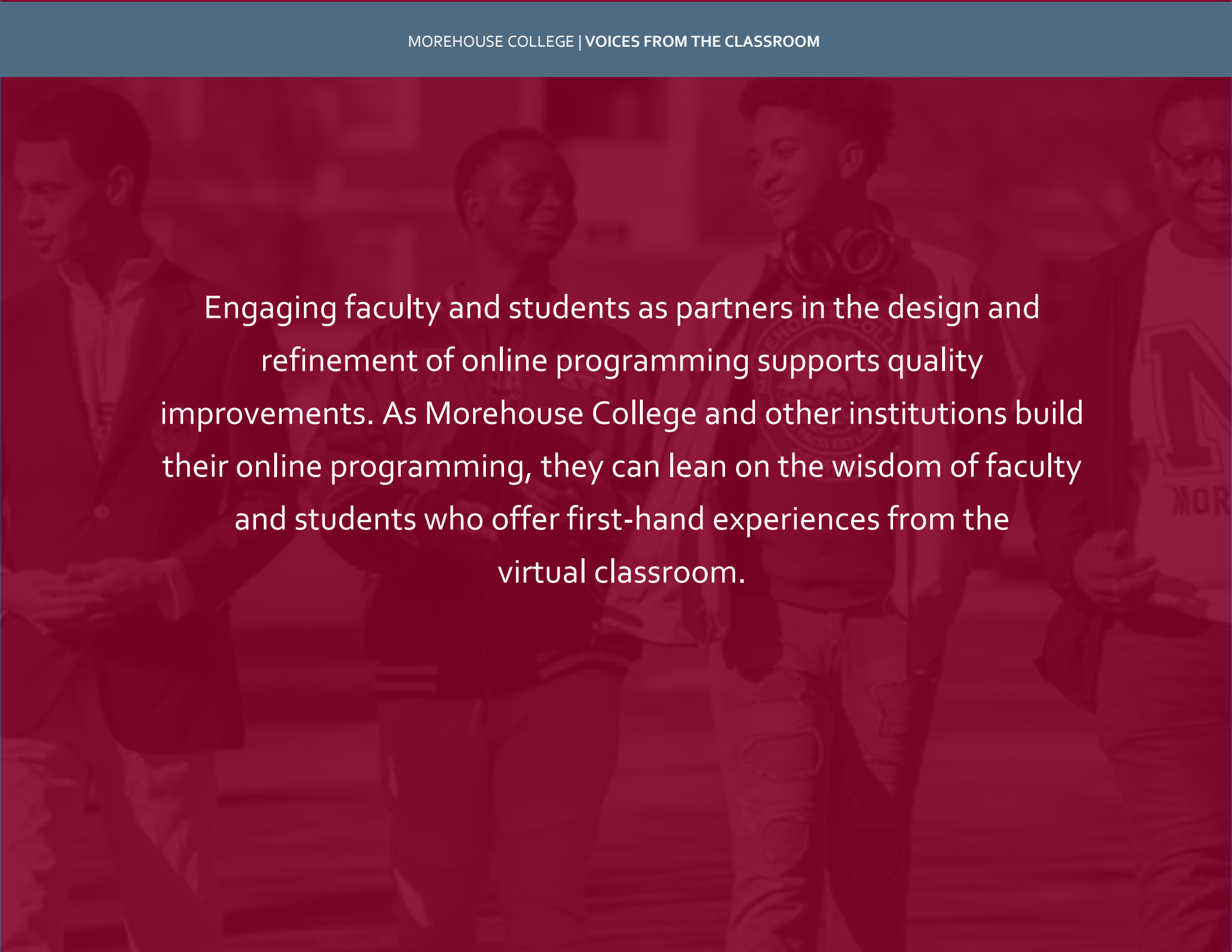


Faculty seek to provide students with an online learning experience of equal quality to their in-person courses to ensure both faculty and students can achieve their goals.

FACULTY REFLECTIONS ON QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

"My students and I together, we can do a really good job—to the greatest degree to recreate the energy and environment and relationship that I have with them in the classroom, virtually as well. So for example, I require cameras to be on."

"My primary focus is making sure that my online students receive the same level of education that my on-ground students receive while it's accelerated—because I do in eight weeks what my on-ground students do in 15 weeks. After three terms, I hold firm to that still. I always begin the term by letting my students know that you are getting the same level of education, the same exposure, receiving the same kind of content and engagement in terms of substance and quality that my on-ground students are getting."



Engaging faculty and students as partners in the design and refinement of online programming supports quality improvements. As Morehouse College and other institutions build their online programming, they can lean on the wisdom of faculty and students who offer first-hand experiences from the virtual classroom.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Equal Measure spoke with five faculty members and four students to compile these reflections. We thank those individuals for their time and insights about their experiences.

ABOUT THE SERIES

This product is the third in a series of knowledge sharing resources created as part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Digital Learning Infrastructure Capacity and Knowledge Sharing investment. As the learning consultant, Equal Measure partnered with the foundation's Postsecondary Success team and with Howard University, Morehouse College, Paul Quinn College, and UNCF to inform foundation strategy as well as awareness about digital learning infrastructure that drives success for HBCU students specifically and equitable student success in higher education more broadly.