

Over enrollment affects community, classes

VOICE OF THE STAFF

For the past several years, grade sizes have steadily been climbing. In the 2000s, class sizes were an average of 119 students. In the early 2010s, the average class size was about 127 students and although the sizes only grew to about 130, Director of Admissions, **Joe Silvestri**, explains that the school is not overenrolled but rather “fully enrolled.” Even so, students and teachers have felt a difference, reporting larger classroom numbers, cramped communal spaces, and most importantly, a loss of communication and community.

From the outset, two areas where the whole school should be able to meet, the Juliet Nelson Auditorium (JNA) and the lunchroom, have reached their limits. This has forced half of the sophomore class into the Carlson Commons for assembly and freshmen into the gym for lunch due to a lack of space. The separation from the rest of the student body aggravates the students, not only because of the loss of tradition of holding assembly in the JNA or eating with one’s friends in the cafeteria, but because of a diminishing feeling of community.

Slow Down in Fast-Moving High School

Why appreciating high school matters

Bernadette Whitely | Editor-in-Chief

When I started to write this article, I was going to offer some hopefully wise pieces of advice that I have learned from being at Blake since Pre-K. However, as I began to write, it felt like I followed a generic formula. I was planning to include advice along the lines of taking classes you enjoy, balancing school work and social

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life, not spending time with people who don’t treat you well, and so on. Although these are solid pieces of advice, they feel slightly obvious and honestly a little overdone. It felt ingenuine to have my last article filled with surface-level advice after

The problem of over-enrollment continues in other aspects of the school, as class sizes have grown from about 15 students on average in the early 2000s to around 18 or 19. While three extra students in a class may not seem to affect the education a student receives, teachers are increasingly required to divide their time between each student, and vital one-on-one time may be cut short. Therefore, for many students, the best time to meet with a teacher is either during office hours before school or FLEX after school. However, often students are joined by other students, resulting in large groups, making it difficult to work individually with a teacher. So, how do we address the problem of over-enrollment and potentially shift the thinking of our school to rediscover our community?

The problem is more challenging than believed because we cannot reduce the number of students in each grade or classroom. Therefore, the changes have to come from elsewhere, starting with the school schedule. First, a shift in the daily schedule to include a tutorial time after lunch or shortened advisory on Wednesdays will allow students to meet with a teacher and encourage more students to seek out

four years on the paper and being at Blake for most of my life.

Aside from random pieces of advice that I have picked up throughout my time at Blake, one of the biggest things I have learned, especially in the last year, is how fast high school goes by. When I was a freshman, I remember my four older siblings telling me to slow down and enjoy high school while I could because before I knew it, it would be over. At the time, I ignored this cliché advice, only to realize three years later

that they were right.

I didn’t fully understand my siblings’ advice until my senior year when I realized that growing up is an incredibly weird feeling that you can’t prepare for. It’s a confusing mix of both excitement and fear for the future. This

individualized instruction.

In addition, a culture shift is needed. Students who come to seek help in the morning often see doors closed and teachers talking amongst themselves and they frequently feel that they are not welcome to bother teachers for help.

Conversely, teachers feel that students rarely come to ask for help and are thus not expected to be present all the time in their classrooms. To mitigate the lack of understanding between teachers and students, open communication is needed. Teachers should continue to encourage students to come to office hours and be more receptive to students with literal open doors and a schedule that indicates when the best times a student can ask for help. Students should also understand that office hours is a time to be utilized for help and that they are expected to reach out for help if they need it.

In all, while over-enrollment has created problems within the community and the classroom, it is important that we do not simply complain about the difficulties. Instead, we must actively work together between students, teachers, and administrators to create a better environment for learning and collaboration.

feeling was amplified as graduation got closer and suddenly, growing up no longer felt abstract or far away.

Unfortunately, there isn’t a step-by-step method to prepare for the future and all of the unexpected turns that will inevitably show up. However, the one solid piece of advice I can offer is to slow down, at least for a little bit. High school goes by incredibly fast and before you know it, you will be forced to make semi-adult choices, like college decisions.

For a long time, I took high school for granted and secretly wished the time away. I didn’t take time to truly appreciate everything around me and instead, I was constantly looking to the future. But, after all of that, I learned that in the end, you can just let yourself be, even in the uncertainty, fear, and change. You don’t have to fix and solve everything. You can still find peace and grow in the wild of changing times.

Blake Bubble Hurts Diversity of Opinions

Conversations with differing voices discouraged

Sam Tomczik | Staff Writer

Blake strives to be a pluralistic community, representative of many different perspectives. Yet, its community seems to not be able to have conversations fully inclusive of all opinions. While conversations about this lack of differing viewpoints aren’t uncommon, it’s a topic that, despite being critical of the community, continues to be discussed.

While Blake strives in many areas for diversity that mirrors the diversity of its surrounding areas, it does not contain the same ideological diversity. In this, Blake creates a bubble that separates its community from the general population. This is noticeable, as while constructive conversations about varying political topics are encouraged, they often result in a singular perspective being echoed. Furthermore, as unpopular, but not harm-

ful, views are shared, the community does not produce an ideologically diverse conversation. This isn’t a reflection of the students abilities to have a more nuanced discussion, rather it’s exemplary

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of the culture at Blake.

This culture, revolving around particular political perspective being clearly seen as popular, leads to people feeling that they may not be fully accepted if they share their opinion that they know to be less popular. This further contributes to this cycle of popular and unpopular opinions, which creates an environment at Blake that to many, feels like a bubble compared to other communities.

This is not to say that Blake does not strive to create constructive conversations. After events which have highlighted

opinions unpopular within Blake, administration has made efforts to hold balanced conversations with an array of varying views. Blake provides resources to be well educated on the topic discussed, yet

many seem to forgo these in order to stick to their pre-existing notions. Moreover, the problem of ideological diversity at Blake is that it has been built by the students rather than by administration.

The problem lies within many people not being open minded to new or opposing perspectives, leading to, those who find that their views are contrary to the majority opinion, feeling scared to fully express their ideas. This is contrary to what Blake attempts to provide, a diverse community, open to varying educated viewpoints and people.

Immunocompromised Remain at Risk

A lack of protections for at-risk people

Samantha Singh | Contributing Writer

Officials at the World Health Organization (WHO) have recently encouraged continuous masking to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, despite the absence of the mask mandate. While the Blake administration updated the masking protocol to optional masking around three months ago, the Blake administration has yet to address the safety and well-being of at-risk and immunocompromised students. This blatant disregard for immunocompromised individuals already exacerbates the pre-existing lack of support educational institutions have offered pre-pandemic.

Evaluating the vulnerability of our students, teachers, and families of Blake is a necessary measure to ensure the safety of our community. Community care involves wearing your mask, staying home if you’re sick, and getting tested regularly. It is also important to note that even though you may be vaccinated, you do not necessarily have immunity against subsequent infections. Being responsible about your transmission, as it poses significant risk to

vulnerable people, is most important. Vaccination has been proven to significantly decrease chances of long-COVID, a long-term form of COVID with symptoms like migraines and permanent vision and taste loss, among many more. They have also been proven to have less efficacy within immunocompromised individuals. Despite this, the Blake administration has not initiated any immunocompromised accommodations that we are aware of, nor

never reached out to her or her family in order to prioritize their safety after the mitigation requirements were lifted at Blake, such as the mask mandate. She states “I do wear a mask to protect her because I don’t know what I would do if [my mother] got sick again. I was pretty upset when the mask mandate got lifted because I know my mom’s immune system isn’t where it used to be, so this puts her at an even bigger risk for getting CO-

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have they provided any accommodations for students and teachers living with young, elderly, or immunocompromised individuals. Though these individuals may have not been eligible for disability accommodations pre-pandemic, they now find themselves with grossly inadequate protection, as the Blake administration continuously fails to prioritize their protection.

Jahnvi Chopra ‘23 lives with her mother who has beaten breast cancer. The Blake administration has

VID.” She wants students, teachers, and administrators who ignorantly celebrated the mask mandate being lifted to know that “their selfishness is taking away from others.” The administration was far too quick to promote the “new normal” that disregarded the safety and well-being of immunocompromised individuals in the Blake community. Now, they have yet to prioritize the needs of these individuals, as they continuously fail those disproportionately affected by the pandemic.