

Unlocking Belonging: Insights from BYU Students on Faculty Connection

We asked first-year and senior BYU students, “What about your BYU experience has contributed to or detracted from your sense of belonging at BYU?” Nearly **2,700 students** shared their thoughts.

Based on student responses, here are three things you can do to increase students’ belonging.

1 Demonstrate care and love for students.

More than anything, students identified faculty’s love, kindness, and inclusion as key contributors to belonging at BYU. Students highlighted the impact of faculty knowing students, understanding and working through students’ unique situations, and caring about students’ academic and overall well-being.

“I personally have felt very included at BYU because of the professors in my program. They have gone above and beyond to help me in my personal situation to make sure I succeed in all aspects of my life, not just academics.”

“Having teachers that cared about me and helped me succeed through the trials I went through contributed a lot to my sense of belonging.”

2 Provide an engaging and supportive environment for learning.

“The professors take extra care to explain concepts that either I or the class collectively are struggling with, and extra support is offered through numerous opportunities to attend office hours or review sessions.”

“The professors have always encouraged me to participate fully in class, and I am grateful for how that has made me into an active and engaged student. The professors have all been really amazing at making me feel like I belong.”

Students attributed a sense of belonging to professors who cared about student learning. Professors who taught clearly and enthusiastically, gave plain feedback, and created space for students to share helped them to feel like they belonged at BYU.

3 Combine the academic and the spiritual in teaching.

Students valued professors who integrated spiritual and academic learning in the classroom. Students felt that these connections affirmed their divine identity and supported them in their spiritual and intellectual growth.

“I love how much the Church of Jesus Christ is integrated into this university. I love that we pray before and during class. I love how we relate secular teachings to gospel teachings. It’s made me feel like I belong as a daughter of God.”

“I really enjoy the unique emphasis of scientific study and religious faith. It has allowed me to grow mentally and spiritually. I have learned more about science and reason without abandoning my religious faith.”