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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Education Professors Explore Effects of Pandemic Learning: Showing Up Still Matters**

**CEDARVILLE, OHIO** -- In an educational era defined by rapid transition and virtual methods, Cedarville University professors are affirming the benefits of academic attendance during COVID-19 through qualitative research.

Dr. Ruth Sylvester, associate professor of education and principal researcher, has been leading research about the school of education's freshmen students and their learning experiences the last few months of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the help of Dr. Tianhong Zhang, assistant professor of education, and Dr. Lynn Roper, assistant professor of special education.

"I wanted their perceptions: what quality of instruction they received remotely, what remote courses were most challenging and what their thoughts are on learning during the pandemic," Sylvester shared.

Sylvester and her team have collected 75 survey responses and have conducted 20 personal interviews with student participants to further explore their experiences.

Though still in the process of data analysis, Sylvester and her team's preliminary findings indicate one clear theme so far: Showing up still matters.

"The students are saying that sometimes, not everyone in their class would show up to a Zoom class, and the discussion wouldn't be as rich as a result," Sylvester said. "We have consistently seen that students thrive on interaction with their peers."

Sylvester and her team are working closely with three students from a qualitative research class that was taught by Dr. Michael Firmin to analyze the data and increase its credibility through peer debriefing.

"I thought it would be beneficial for the university to find out from these freshmen what their experiences were," Sylvester added. "That's what most excites me — disseminating the knowledge that we're learning from our students. Their experiences can be used to help shape and improve our programs."

Based on some of these findings, Sylvester has changed requirements for her teacher-candidates prior to student teaching. Now, they are assigned to teach an online Zoom lesson to their peers to practice interactive remote teaching and learning.

Sylvester's team is also attentive to the emergency nature of online teaching in the past year.

“Because of recent online education being out of an emergency, it’s much different than the type of online learning we talk about on a daily basis,” Zhang said. “We must assume that every student had a different experience, and this study will give us a bigger picture of how well we transitioned to online education rapidly.”

They remain excited to see how they can use data to continually provide their students with the best educational experience and preparation for teaching.

“As teachers, no matter where or how, we try our best to solve the problem and give the best to our students,” Zhang shared.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the [Bachelor of Arts in Middle Childhood Education program](#), strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit [www.cedarville.edu](http://www.cedarville.edu).

Written by Heidie Raine