This event triggered a lot of emotions for me because the subject was something I was very

affected by, but I feel as though the panel discussion did not cover how all students felt about the

pandemic. As horrible as this pandemic has been, for many reasons as discussed yesterday, there are also

many good things that came out of the pandemic as well. One that directly affects students, particularly those who struggle with mental health like me, is having more control of our education.

Looking back on last semester, it was the best of both worlds for students like me, true autonomous education. In-person class was optional, and recordings would be uploaded after the class for those who chose not to attend-- for whatever reason. This allowed every student to choose which format worked best for them. While this policy was implemented for safety reasons it had an unintentional added benefit. Before COVID, if on class day my depression and anxiety were getting the best of me, I had to choose between missing valuable class content or prioritizing my mental health and taking some time for self-care.

Fast forward to the beginning of this semester, Jefferson College of Nursing decided to double down on in-person class policies. In-person class was now required, not recorded, and a "valid" excuse was necessary to be excused. Of the "valid" excuse, needing a mental health day was not one of them. Forcing students to produce an excuse and somehow find a doctor to write a note to validate their lie. As you can imagine, I was shocked that in a healthcare program, anxiety and depression are not considered valid medical excuses.

One of the most distressing aspects of this entire pandemic for me personally, was hoping that another variant would come so that faculty would be forced to reinstitute the policies that enabled me to get the most out of my education without jeopardizing my mental health. The guilt I have felt since omicron hit, and classes returned to a virtual format has been extremely hard to overcome; all because of an environment created where invisible diseases do not hold the same weight as a viral pathogen.

This drawing depicts a different point of view that school faculty and many others may not have considered.