Self Assessment- COGS125

I really didn't know what to expect when I started Design 1. I was used to thinking about the brain and behavior through data and theory because of my Biology, neuroscience and cognitive science background. But Design 1 and COGS 125 gave me something very different: a place where my thoughts could be in their natural state, messy, and even emotional. I came here to learn more about the creative side of human-centered design, and now I know more about how interaction, space, and intention shape the things we do every day.

One of the most valuable things I learned was how to use design as a language , one that communicates not just information, but care. Whether I was sketching an interface the size of a watch or rethinking how a locker could reduce student stress, I began to see how deeply our environments influence how we feel, focus, and function. Projects on an inch, foot, and yard scale challenged and clarified my thinking simultaneously. (The designs have been changed several times and are still "under construction.") My inch-scale smartwatch felt very personal because it was made for students with ADHD like me. It made me remember that good design isn't about adding fancy features, it's about making life a little easier and more breathable.

Certainly, there were challenges to face. Especially in my advanced interaction design class, I often felt like everyone knew exactly what they were doing while I was lost in comparison. But that feeling forced me to try, fail, and grow. Sometimes it's hard for me to organize my thoughts because I have ADHD. I often have waves of ideas that I find hard to sort through or put in order. I had periods of feeling overwhelmed or concerned that my contribution wasn't "enough" and I was scared to talk. But all these made me speak up, ask for help, and understand that working with others doesn't mean being perfect; it means listening, adapting, and showing up.

Looking back, I'm proud of how far I've come , not just in skill, but in mindset. I used to get stuck when I tried to do everything right the first time. I now feel better with prototypes and sketches because I know they don't have to be perfect from the start. When I go back to my drafts, I can make them a little better each time. This way, I'm slowly building something stronger. If I could go back, I'd give myself permission to explore more freely, earlier, and messy , and to share those early experiences without fear.

This course helped me see design as a space where science, empathy, and creativity intersect. It touched my desire to create things that make people feel seen, especially those going through hardship in their life, navigating ADHD, anxiety, or cultural transitions. As someone who moved to the U.S. eight years ago, I carry with me not only a love for my culture but also a sensitivity to what it means to feel like an outsider. That perspective fuels the kind of designer I hope to become , one who designs with accessibility, intention, and care.

It's still a work in progress, just like me. But I'm happy with what I've done here. Even with everything I've been through and still am going through, this class, even though it was very far outside of my comfort zone, was one of the few where I actually learned and grew. It wasn't

just about grades like almost all other classes; it was about growing as an individual, creator of ideas, and developer. It makes me happy to learn, build, and design.