**COVID-19**

Department of English, East Carolina University

ENGL 1100 Foundations of College Writing

Dr. Cheryl Dudasik-Wiggs

Fall 2021

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, a pandemic can be classified as “an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and typically affects a significant proportion of the population” (Merriam-Webster, Entry 2, Definition 1, 2021). In December 2019, our world was drastically changed as a virus emerged known as COVID-19. The discovery originated in China and rapidly spread throughout 200 countries creating a worldwide pandemic (Arsenault, 2020). COVID-19 has affected millions of people significantly altering their lives. According to USA Facts, as of August 30, 2021, the United States had reported 38,275,524 cases of COVID-19, with North Carolina accounting for 1,208,314 of those cases (“US COVID-19 cases and deaths by state”, 2021). As a result of this pandemic, it has become necessary for colleges to implement requirements that will ensure the safety of their administration and students. One of these requirements is mandatory COVID-19 testing for all residential students. As I eagerly prepared for my journey as an ECU pirate, I knew that this was a precaution that was necessary and set off to fulfill this requirement. Afterwards, the nurse informed me that someone would notify me the results within twenty-four hours. Without a care in the world, my roommate and I took off to explore the campus and begin our new adventure. Who would of the thought that this simple nose swab would have drastically changed my beginning as a college freshman!

As I eagerly ventured down College Hill for my first college class on Monday morning, I received that life-changing email informing me that I was positive for the COVID-19 virus. Completely shocked, I stopped in my tracks as I reread the message just in case I did not comprehend correctly. Unfortunately, I did not misinterpret the message as my results were positive! As a result of testing positive, I was to report back to my dorm room in preparation for my ten-day quarantine. I immediately called my mom and let her know about this alarming news. She calmly told me to pack up my belongings, and we would deal with everything else at home. As I drove the thirty miles home, I had time to grasp the reality of my diagnosis, and a sense of anxiety began to set in.

Immediately my attention turned to the fact that I had made it a whole three days at East Carolina, and now I was returning home for a ten-day period of isolation. I had just started my college experience. I was meeting new friends and enjoying a newfound sense of freedom and excitement for this journey. How much would I miss as my new friends would continue the journey without me? My attention then shifted to the fact that not only was I going to miss out on the social aspect of college, but the academic part as well. As stated earlier, I was going to my first ever college class when I received the news. I realized that I never made it to class! We all know that those first classes are very critical because usually, the professors go over their syllabus and give helpful advice on how to survive. All of a sudden, I realized that not only did I not make it to the first class, but I was going to miss at least two weeks of classes. How was I ever going to catch up from missing so many lectures? Suddenly I felt like I was stranded on an island by myself. Don’t get me wrong, I have had experience with remote learning. My whole senior year in high school was remote, and I took thirty-six hours of college courses online. However, I have never taken six classes in one semester, with College English, General Biology, and a Biology Lab being among these classes. Finally, I began to become concerned about the virus itself. How was the virus going to affect me physically and mentally? The fear of the unknown started to set in. Would I be fortunate and only have mild symptoms, or would I have complications that would require additional medical resources?

Once I returned home and settled in, I began to relax a little. I immediately emailed all my professors and explained that I had tested positive and would not be attending classes for ten days. As soon as I hit send, I felt a sense of relief. At least my professors knew that I did not skip the first day of class! Amazingly I even heard back from some of my professors the very first day I was home. They understood and sent well wishes for a speedy recovery. It was then that I realized how thankful I was that I never made it to my first class. You see because I did not step foot in that classroom, I had not put my professor and classmates at risk of exposure! Later that night, as I was lying in my comfortable bed at home, I began to realize that I was very thankful to be able to quarantine at home instead of on campus trapped in a small room without any human interaction. At home, I was able to have my own space since I live in a two-story house. I have my room, bathroom, office area, and den on the second floor. This would allow me the opportunity to have space to safely not expose my family while recovering in a comfortable environment. Let’s not forget having an overprotective mom who ensured that I had three square meals a day and the medication I needed to aid in my recovery. As the days progressed, I became overwhelmed adjusting from being a high school student to a college freshman regarding my coursework. As my mom and I continuously text back and forth, I realized that I could handle this. I just needed to think positively and reach out to my professors if I needed a life preserver. My professors responded when needed and offered positive feedback to encourage me. Alternative lab assignments were posted, and lectures were recorded so that I could listen to the information that I was missing. A few symptoms of COVID-19 are headache, extreme fatigue, and cough. Thankfully these were the only symptoms I experienced, and I learned quickly to listen to my body. My professors were extremely compassionate and gave options of extensions if needed. As the days progressed, I realized that I was learning time management and picking up a few study strategies that I may not have implemented the first two weeks as a college freshman, as new friendships and events may have lured me away. As day ten approached, I felt like a kid on Christmas day. I was now free and ready to resume my adventure.

While driving back to school, I had time to reflect on this experience. As a Christian, I acknowledge that God has a plan, and all things work in his time. Although I did not agree with God’s timing, I am incredibly blessed with some of the outcomes that I was able to take away from this encounter. I am grateful that God has provided me with a supportive family that lovingly provides for me. I am thankful for the ECU administration and professors that truly are there for the student. Most importantly, I am fortunate that I am one of the survivors of this deadly virus and able to return for my college adventure.

Works Cited

Arsenault, A. (n.d.). *A timeline of covid-19 (coronavirus)*. Very well Health. https://www.verywellhealth.com/coronavirus-covid-19-timeline-4798671.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Pandemic*. Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pandemic.

*US COVID-19 cases and deaths by state*. USAFacts.org. (2021, September 2). https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/.