**My COVID-19 Experience**

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ENGL 1100 Foundations of College Writing

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Fall 2021

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Since March of 2020, my life has changed. Some days I think COVID-19 has ruined parts of my life. Other days I am thankful for the time in quarantine and what that period in life did for me as a person. During quarantine, I learned that sometimes you must let go of control in your own life. I am used to being in control and having every day planned out, I appreciate order and need a routine to feel accomplished each day. So, my experience with COVID, is that it forced me to grow as a person. Over the last year or so, I have learned that life is what you make it. This pandemic made me appreciate the small things in life and to not take any day for granted.

My whole life, I dreamed of growing up and what it must be like. Thanks to the movie *High School Musical*, I had this idea in my head of how great it must be to graduate with all your best friends. It seems as if this pandemic tries to steal away some of life’s best moments. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, high school and college life looked a lot different. I always wanted to experience graduation all together as a group of Seniors, game days at Dowdy Ficklen Stadium and hanging out with friends and family without the worry of making each other sick.

Last school year was my Senior Year of High School, I started the year with a negative outlook. I didn’t think it was fair that I would not be able to experience all the things that came with being a Senior. I did not have a prom, I did not go on a Senior trip, and many more things were cancelled due to social distancing and other protocols. Every school year since the COVID outbreak, I kept hoping that it would get better. It seems as if each school year has been the same. The same protocols are in place, the disease is worsening, we are still wearing masks, we are getting vaccinated. This leaves me with the question, will the pandemic ever end?

I try and keep this positive outlook on life while wondering how long this time at ECU will last before getting sent right back to the house that built me. Luckily for me, Greenville has always been home to me. I love my family, but I have been looking forward to living on campus and learning to take care of myself. Making friends in college would be a lot easier without the worry of who is vaccinated and who is not and who has been exposed to COVID unknowingly spreading it to others accidentally. I really thought we would have better control in our country at this point-I am worried. Will people get vaccinated to slow this virus down? I understand the fear, but I also understand the consequences.

One day we will look back at this time in history and tell new generations about this awful virus that killed so many. My prayer is that is ends soon and that lives are spared. Selfishly, I am praying my time as an ECU Pirate is not ruined.