**COVID-19**

COVID-19 has not been easy for me, the start of this pandemic cut my senior year of high school short. My freshman year of college, which I was so looking forward too, has been entirely online and the fact that despite my best efforts to avoid the virus I ended up contracting COVID-19.

The way that COVID-19 has changed everything about society has burnt me out more than ever. I am tired of sitting in my room staring at a screen every day of the week, I would much rather be in person as would many others. Not only does being in person allow me to meet new people but I also learn much better when I am being taught in a classroom. I feel that this last year of school has flown by and I haven’t learned or retained as much information as I should have. I have had people telling me to see the positives in all of this but honestly, I am running out of positives to look at. So many people have told me “at least it’s just your freshman year of college and not your senior year” and I know that I am just a freshman and that I have at least 3 more years of college, however my freshman year has been something that I have been looking forward to since I started applying to colleges.

Freshman year is the first year I got to be fully on my own. I choose a school 6.5 hours away from home, so I am genuinely on my own while I am here. For the two weeks that I got that freedom, I absolute loved it. Don’t get me wrong I love being home with my family, it is just not the freshman year I envisioned. It is hard for me to believe that we have reached the end of the semester, I keep telling myself, “just a few more weeks and then you’re done freshman year” and to me that is absolutely crazy. I do not feel like I have gone through an entire year of college. I’m not sure if that is due to the pandemic or if that’s how it always feels. For me there was no adjusting to college life. I wasn’t able to learn what it was like to be on my own.

I feel that this virus has taken more from me than even I realize, I have missed out on things that I have been waiting for my entire life, I didn’t get a normal graduation, a senior prom, a senior soccer season, or a true freshman year experience. I know that all of these things are small in the grand scheme of how COVID-19 has affected the world, however they are the things that I do that make me love school. As much as I don’t want to admit it, I wanted to live in a dorm, and I wanted to be able to make friends with the girls living right down the hall from me. When we were sent home, I was devastated, as were many other students, and I know it was completely out of ECU’s control and they have done everything to try and make this year worth it, but there have been many times when I have contemplated taking a year off. I have contemplated this thought more and more as things have started to open back up. I have a special soft spot for traveling and seeing so many places begin to open again for travel, has really made me want to just pack my bags and go. But I can’t, as much of a pain this year has been I made a commitment to myself to finish my freshman year despite everything that has been happening.

While there are many negatives surrounding this pandemic it also comes with positives. For example, I have learned a lot about myself when it comes to school during this pandemic. I now know that I am not an online learner, and that I need to be in the classroom, making connections with people and seeing what I am being taught. I have also learned its okay to keep your friend circle small. I’ve learned the importance of having good relationships and building on those relationships constantly. Most importantly I have learned how vital it is to take time to focus on yourself, especially in times like the ones we are going through right now. This pandemic may have taken away many things that I have been looking forward to, but it has also given me multiple different positives that I would not have had if we were not going through a pandemic.