**COVID-19**

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“Spring break will be extended through Friday, March 20, 2020”. Since that day, my life changed forever. What is it like to be in college during a pandemic? To start off, I have yet to experience one full year of college. I started college in August 2019. Everything was going good until around March when a very bad illness started being talked about and reported on the news. From then on, college has never been the same. Around the end of March, all classes were transitioned to online. At first I was a little excited to be back home because we had to move out the dorms. I thought class work was going to be easier but boy was I wrong. Professors just started posting files and files of notes and due dates. And honestly it would have been fine if we actually met for classes like on zoom or webex, but we did not. We were just left with a bunch of information to read and work to do. No class discussions and no class participation. Is this how we are supposed to learn? A few weeks later the news about Covid is getting bigger. A lockdown is about to happen. We are going to have a curfew! Second semester of freshman year is over.

Covid has severely impacted my college experience. Right now it is my Junior year and I have yet to experience many college experiences. A good majority of all of the college courses are online. There are still many in person classes, but it is just not the same. The whole campus environment is different. Some people are on edge because of the virus while others just want to go back to their rooms and get away from everyone. You can literally walk beside someone who was covid or sit beside someone in class who has it and you would never know. Drastic change from my first semester of college in 2019. People would just come up to you and start conversations, making friends was so easy, so many campus events, and the amount of parties. Now, I don’t want any type of physical contact with anyone. Although all of this is still going on, there are many of the students who do not care about the virus. They are simply enjoying their lives not worrying about Covid at all which I think is a little crazy. They are still going to parties, BIG parties and not even wearing a mask. Also, on campus testing has been made a requirement by the Chancellor of East Caroline University to get a better control of the spread of Covid. Vaccines are also available but not everyone is vaccinated due to different reasons.

Trying to be safe while also living on campus in a dorm and living in an apartment with college roommates is kind of hard. Even when you try to protect yourself, take precautions and stay germ free, you have to worry about your roommates because they still go out and act like there is not a pandemic happening. They are out at every party and event and then guess what? You are sharing a room, kitchen or bathroom with them so if they get sick, you are almost guaranteed to be introduced to their germs and sickness. This is really unfair but there are ways to get out of this including getting a single dorm room or a one bedroom apartment. Staying home is also an option but not a good one depending on the circumstances. For me when I was home during lockdown taking classes sophomore, I still had other responsibilities since I was still home. I was still asked to babysit and help do things even though they knew I had lots of schoolwork to do. It was very hard to focus when people were constantly in and out of the house and children running around.

What have I learned? I have learned that online classes are not for me. I am a hands on person. I enjoy physically doing things, not online. I am also a biology major so most of my courses are sciences and labs. Imagine trying to learn chemistry from a powerpoint. No professor to talk to and watch draw on a white board. Just notes. Imagine doing chemistry lab experiments ONLINE. “Mixing” chemicals online, using a calorimeter online, taking measurements online and looking at chemical reactions online by reading numbers. Labs are supposed to be where you actually run the experiments yourself, not this because what did I learn from this experiment? Nothing at all! The effect of online classes on me has been very negative. I used to be so eager to wake up early and go to class and take notes and use my different colored highlighters but now, I lack motivation to even keep up with what I am supposed to be doing because it is not interesting at all. I am not even learning anything, just submitting assignments before the deadline which is usually 11:59 p.m. Another thing is that some of the professors just show that they do not even care about anything since the pandemic has started. They show no effort in actually trying to make sure we are actually understanding the material. There are definitely some ways that they could add interactive assignments for their students but instead they just leave us hanging. Yet we are still paying all this tuition for this low quality learning and limited access to all of the amenities on campus.

Campus events have begun to start back but is it really safe to go to them even though they are outdoors? Crowded pool parties and cookouts, no thank you! Is it really safe to go to the football games? Everyone is trying to make things go back to normal without being safe at all, but this is college life during a pandemic.