**COVID-19**

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Department of English, East Carolina University

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Dr. Cheryl Dudasik-Wiggs

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Graduating high school during a pandemic, was an experience I never thought I would have. The pandemic left my chapter of high school unfinished. I never knew that I played my last soccer game, drove to school one last time, or even saw all my peers around me for the final time. Senior year was supposed to be so much more than what it was. I am grateful for being able to have the first part of my senior year, but I was looking forward to enjoying all the events at the end to close my chapter of high school as all the classes before were able to.

The pandemic prevented me from finishing my four-year varsity career in soccer. My team and I dreamed of going to the play offs one last time. We practiced months before the season in every weather condition we were given. The season started and ended within a week and a half. My team and I were able to play three out of our twenty-two games on our schedule this was devastating to me to say the least. I never stood on the field knowing it was my last game.

In addition to playing soccer, I was eager to have prom. Personally, I loved prom last year being able to dress up and party with my peers. Especially being a senior made me more excited to have prom. I ordered my dress months in advance and was planning what to do before and after prom. I was looking forward to being able to make memoires that would last me the rest of my life. When the Coronavirus came to North Carolina, prom was thrown out the window during quarantine. However, I still dressed up and took pictures with my boyfriend and had to make the most of it. Never in my life would I have predicted I would never have senior prom.

Furthermore, I enjoyed going to school every day and to be able to socialize with my peers and learn at the same time. I loved senior year even though I always wondered why graduation felt like it was never getting closer. Until March 13th, I walked through my school like it was any other day, but little did I know I would never return back to high school. On that following Saturday, I received the notice that I would not return back to school. Before the pandemic impacted me, I was stressed with all my school work and balancing extra circulars so at first I was thankful for a break. When reality hit a month later, that there was no chance of return, is when I wish I could have gone back to high school and done it all over again. Emotionally, when everything set it for me I started questioning everything I did throughout high school and what I could have done better and it was hard for me to handle the change. I believe it was a challenging change to overcome because I would go straight to college feeling like I never finished high school.

For seniors, our grades were based off of pass or fail which was determined by the grades we had on the last day of class. After this news, the next question that arose was how am I going to graduate? My school did things a bit different than everyone else. We had a senior day where we drove through the carpool line to pick up a goody bag along with our cap and gown and cords we received. Following that, on the day of graduation everyone and their families sat in their cars in a line wrapped around the school waiting to drop their senior off to walk through the school to graduate. When I reached the doors to go into the school, I had no idea of what to expect. Walking in, everyone had a dot they would stand on six feet apart and the halls were lined with posters for ever student. After walking through the main hall, I walked outside onto a small stage to receive my diploma and my parents were in front of the stage in the car able to watch and take a few pictures. And, just like that, I graduated and hopped right back into the car.

In the case of the Coronavirus, senior year for the class of 2020 looked unlike any class before in the second semester. Sports, prom, and other events were canceled. No one knew when the last of anything was to occur until there was no going back. Moreover, graduating with hundreds of people was no longer a possibility. This begs to question: is this the new normal? And if so for how long?