**COVID-19**

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It was March 13, 2020. I was a senior in high school at the time and it was our last spring break before we went to college the next year. My friends and I did not pay much attention to the news because we went to Florida and just wanted to have fun. On our drive home we turn on the radio and hear the word ‘lockdown’. Our ears peaked out of curiosity and that is when we discovered that Covid-19 was much more serious than any of us had thought. When we returned home from our trip, we received a notice from our high school that we will not be returning for the next two weeks. At this point, we all still had hope we would go back and took advantage of not having to go for two weeks. However, after the two weeks had gone by, we got more information that our senior prom was going to be cancelled and not rescheduled. This really weakened a lot of our hearts as that is something you look forward to for senior year. Lastly, the news came that our graduation was cancelled and was not looking good for it being rescheduled. With all of this being thrown at us in a short period of time, my friends and I tried to stay positive and think about our college experience and how most of the lockdown and mask requirements should be lifted by that time. We were wrong.

I moved into my dorm at East Carolina University on August 12, 2020. The first week was going well and I had one in person class I was able to get the college experience with. This was short lasted as the second week I had been there, all classes got moved to online and my roommate and I had been given notice we had to be out by the weekend. This was a huge inconvenience not only on my education but also on my dad who had moved me in two weeks prior. I live about four hours away from campus and my dad works night shifts in the emergency room. In order for me to move out in time to get my refunds, my dad came off of a twelve-hour night shift, drove four hours to pick me up, help me pack all of my belongings up, then drive another four hours home. I soon got resettled into my room at home and was adjusting to my all-online classes, none of which at the time had any mandatory meetings. This was very hard for me to get used to because I love to interact with teachers and be able to ask questions about what we are learning and some teachers, as you may know, are not the best at answering emails. With me being home my first semester of college, I was able to continue working at my old job, but this came with some complications. It was only my parents and I at home and we only had two cars. My dad would work at the hospital some days and at an urgent care he owns other days, and my mom would usually drive separate to the urgent care so she would not have to stay as late as my dad. When these situations occurred, I would have to call out of work sometimes because I did not have a way to get there. Due to this happening very often, my dad had the financial burden of having to buy me a car sooner than he thought he had to.

After roughly two weeks of being home, I started to get back into a routine of online classes and adjusting to what might be the normal from then on. It became difficult not getting the true freshman experience everyone talked about and staring at a computer screen all day for classes. I always enjoyed talking to my teachers in high school and making new friends and with that option not being available in college, it was mentally very hard the first semester of college.

The second semester of college started off a little better because freshman were now allowed to live off of campus. With this option, it made it easier to go out and meet new people and I had one in person class I was able to be interactive with. For me, personally, adjusting to a less social and interactive school style and life in general was extremely difficult and put me in a bad place mentally for a few months. With having one in-person class and being able to live near campus, it has had so many positive effects on my daily living and health. I have been more active than I have been in the past few months, I have met so many new people, and I have been in a more positive mood than I have been before.

It has not been the easiest journey throughout graduating high school and being a freshman in college during a worldwide pandemic, however I am learning something new about myself every day and have noticed tremendous self-improvement. I have focused on my body and mind and what has been helping me get through and what is not working. By not being able to go out and do the activities I did before the pandemic, I got to learn so much about myself and what I need to improve in my daily live to live the healthiest life I can. In a way, I am thanking this pandemic for giving me the time I needed alone but was not willing to make for myself before.