**COVID-19**

Anonymous

Department of English, East Carolina University

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Dr. Cheryl Dudasik-Wiggs

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First day of my senior year I was thinking about many experiences I knew were ahead of me. As college application, standardize testing, and all my challenging classes out of the way I knew that senior year would be my year, that I would be able to enjoy and make the last few memories before heading off to college. Fast forward to January of 2020, as my classmates and I walked into our biomedical science class we heard of rumors from our teacher that there was a deadly virus spreading across China. As we continued that period in discussion about the “so called” virus, I wasn’t alarmed as it sounded like a short-term outbreak. For the next month every class period was spent talking about COVID-19. As my teacher mentioned that she had a feeling that we would be sent home soon, I rolled my eyes thinking it was not possible for a school to close over a virus, but in a blink of an eye our school district announces the closing of our school.

Every senior at my high school was devasted as we knew prom was a couple weeks away. As time went on and our school district extending the closing, we gave up on every event and milestone we were looking forward to. I am a daughter to a single mother and graduation was a very important milestone for my family as I am also the only grandchild to go to college. My grandmother and many other family members were scheduled to fly to my large graduation party from Italy, and other parts of the country that June but as soon as boarders started to close, I started giving up on hope. It al hit me when our venue gave us a call and mentioned that we would not be able to hold our event due to the governors stay at home mandate. Following that call our graduation ceremony was officially canceled and changed to an online format. Ever since I was in middle school, I would imagine myself walking across that stage and making my mother proud, but this dream was not a fully fulfilled. Although we received a so-called graduation through our living room television, I cannot say I have realistically walked across a stage.

During the summer of 2020 I was able to look over many aspects of the pandemic and how it affected me. As I started school, I was lucky enough to have my group of high school friends with me at college as it was already hard making friends amid the pandemic. I only had 1 class in person and that was a lab, so up until this year I never had an actual college lecture class. I know that if the pandemic was not a thing college experiences for class of 2024 and 2025 would be totally different.

After we were sent home due to ECU’s closing it took a lot for me to complete my assignments. Every day I would be glued to my laptop in my room barely having a break. As I was a pre-med track student I was in complete stress as many of my classes were challenging. One thing however that came out of last year was that I was able to rethink about my future. Being sent home and having time to think allowed me to make a great choice of changing my career path. I believe that if it was not for COVID I would still be a pre-med student with a weight on my shoulder.

All my friends had the same experiences last year as they also got a chance to look back at the choices, they made career and education wise. Although majority of my friends did not return to ECU, I am glad that COVID gave everyone a chance to take a second and rethink. I am excited to start the new school year with a different major and new start.