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Longwood: Life during COVID-19

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Coronavirus Essay

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When Longwood sent us the email stating that school would continue online for the rest of the semester, I was in shock. Although we had been doing online classes for almost two weeks, I was still holding out hope that we could come back to our beautiful campus sometime this year. Even after watching all the schools before Longwood start to announce their move to online, and friends at other Universities start texting groupchats about coming home, I didn't want to believe it. Did I walk into Ruffner for the last time this year without even knowing it? The thought of not walking into Upchurch, and seeing friends and Professors as I walked down the long hallway to get to Starbucks made me upset. It was a very scary time, and while it still is, the uncertainty of everything around me was overwhelming. Throughout this time, I've gone through a whirlwind of emotions, and my perspective on CoronaVirus was changing daily.

At first, the main thing I was thinking about was myself and my own grief. I was saddened by the loss of the second half of my Junior year in my favorite place. I was upset because I was losing hours in the field at the elementary school. I was missing out on valuable experience, and connections. I was starting to make connections with the fifth graders, and I loved helping them learn, or even just talk to them about the Harry Potter book that they were on. I didn't want to leave my friends, or miss out on so many Longwood traditions. I was lashing out at my family, who were understanding and empathic to the fact that I was losing precious time at a place I loved so much. My younger sister was also losing an important time in her life, the end of her senior year of high school. She wouldn't have prom or a graduation. We both knew how the other was feeling, and that made a world of a difference. Throughout it all though, I knew that Longwood needed to close, and this was a pandemic. This was when the guilt started to set in.

I felt very selfish when I got upset about my own problems, which aren't as big as millions of others. All of my loved ones were safe, parents still had their jobs, and I had a loving home to come back to. I know how lucky I am, but that only made my guilt even worse when I started to feel sorry for myself. The email that President Reveley sent where he talked about how he understands the loss we feel was reassuring. It was an important email that told us it was okay to grieve this loss, that we weren't alone.

While I was grieving my own losses, I was also extremely worried about my family and the world around me. My dad works at a nursing home in Fredericksburg. While the nursing home hasn't let visitors in since early March, everyday I worry about my dad. Not only do I worry about him getting the Virus from someone, I worry that somehow he could give the virus to a resident. Along with my dad, my uncle is also working during this pandemic. My uncle is a pulmonologist at a hospital in San Francisco, California. Everyday he sees people dying from CoronaVirus, and feels helpless to this virus that took over our world. Everyday though he gets up and goes to work, because people need him right now more than ever. Everyday I worry about him, but everyday I'm so proud of him. Even the last time that we zoomed with him, he was being positive and cheery. It reminded me that while we can't completely go on with our normal lives, there can still be little things to enjoy.

During this time, the things that have gotten me through my supportive professors, zoom calls with friends, and spending time with my family. My professors have tried to make the transition to online as smooth as possible. It wasn't easy at first, because we went right into online classes. But Longwood professors showed grace and compassion while we all adjusted to the new normal. Zoom classes gave a sense of structure to my day, and all of my professors were

only an email away. Zoom calls with friends were a large part in keeping me sane. Sometimes it felt like we were all in the same room. I could pretend we were all sitting in our WalktoCampus apartment, or eating Au Bon Pain at a table in Upchurch. While I couldn't finish my junior year at Longwood, it never felt that far.