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Longwood: Life during COVID-19

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Covid Submission - Final

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Imagine being told you should leave the place that your life takes place and you are your happiest and there is no for sure time you will get to go back. Well that is what it felt like when COVID-19 hit and I had to leave Longwood.

At first, I personally did not take the seriousness of the pandemic as serious as I should have. The Wednesday after classes, after we had gotten back from spring break was when Longwood came out with the announcement that we would go online for 2 weeks. A few days before I went to Walmart to just get groceries from being gone on break. This is what the cleaning aisle looked like. This was just the very beginning of the pandemic in our area.



When my friends and I heard that we were online for two weeks we were honestly excited to not have to go to classes every day. The first couple of days of online class no one really had assignments because professors were trying to get used to switching their classes to online. So, because we did not have much to do, we hung out outside with each other and kind of kept our distance. We did not take it as serious as people are now. We had all sorts of people waving to us and saying hi, we went to restaurants to eat with no difference in how things were run. Twin Lakes was open so many people including myself went there because it was hot out.

After a few days passed my family decided that it was best for me to go home until at least the two weeks of online classes was over. My parents decided this because my on-campus job was closed and the medical treatment at home would be better if I were to get sick. Despite the fact that I would rather have stayed in Farmville, I packed up clothes for about a week and

drove home to Northern Virginia. At this point there was no stay at home order people we just supposed to be cautious. Longwood had said that they would let the student body know by the end of the two weeks of online class if we would be going back for the semester. I did the little of my online work that I had while I was at home. During my time at home many colleges and universities had canceled the rest of their in-person classes. I was still hopeful in thinking that we would be able to go back to campus. Then on March 19th I had just finished eating dinner and checked my phone and an email from Longwood was on my phone. I knew it was about to be the news I did not want to hear. It was. It told us that we were going to have online classes the rest of the semester. I immediately started crying. There were so many things going through my head at the time. "How was I going to get my 60 hours in the classroom?, how do I leave my friends earlier than normal?, what are the seniors going to do?, how am I going to live at home with my whole family for this long?, What is life going to look like?" Everyone I know was upset and crying, no one wanted to have to leave the place we call home for the majority of our year. The seniors were not going to get their senior week, graduation, their last in person college class, any of the typical lasts. Everyone was heartbroken.

Earlier that day my family and I had determined that I could go back to Farmville until a decision was made knowing that most likely classes would be canceled. So, the day after the decision was made, I drove back to Farmville for a few days. I still hung out with friends, restaurants started to close their seating inside so we could only get takeout or go through drive-thrus. After the few days passed, I gathered more of my belongings and went home for good for the semester. It was a sad drive going through town. Leaving the place that you love dearly way earlier than expected was hard. I was going to miss Spring Weekend, my 21st birthday, Pig Roast, and the rest of the spring semester with all my friends. I was going to miss just the little things like the flowering trees on campus, walking around town when the weather was nice, seeing people everywhere, and going to class in person.

Now that I was home, I knew I had to get used to this and figure out what to do. Professors were unsure of what was going to happen with our hour requirements for Practicum. We were all worried that we would not get credit for the classes because we had barely done 20 of the 60 hours we were supposed to. We worried this would delay our graduation, which brought on tons of anxiety and worries. We all just had to wait and see what was going to happen. Eventually we found out that we would still get credit for the classes. We would just have to turn in assignments instead of going into the classroom. It is definitely not the same and we worried about the lack of experience we would gain by missing out on the hours, but we also had faith that our professors would do what was best for us. They did and even though we lost out on the experience they did an amazing job transferring our work to online. Some of my friends still had to "meet" during their class time using Zoom, an online meeting platform, and have lecture that way. I did not have to do this for any of my classes including my major classes. My professors offered optional check ins if needed. Many of my professors also gave us a grace period during this time because of all the changes.

During my time at home things in the world started changing. Non-essential business closed, this meant my Mom, a preschool teacher, was not allowed to work, my Dad would now be working from home. The public schools were closed for the rest of the school year so my two younger sisters would be home and doing online learning. This meant our family of five would all be home together all day. This was an adjustment for all. We all had our own things to do but all needed to use the internet at the same time. We could not really go anywhere because of the closings and the stay at home order that was out in place. This made us all go a little crazy, it

messed up everyone's schedules. Personally, my sleep schedule got messed up because I did not have to be up for class. I would stay up late, sleep in, take a nap and then do my work at night then do the cycle all over again. There was also spare time that I did not know what to do to fill it. I personally decided that I would start working out more because I had nothing else to do and it was nice out.

Many people had this idea, my neighborhood has never been as busy as it was. With everyone home from work and stores being closed no one has anywhere else to go. The government recommended social distancing which meant we had to stay within six feet of others and only be around your immediate family, so people went outside to get out of the house. As more and more people decided to go outside more the government closed all of the state parks in the area. They closed off parking lots so people could not drive and park to go walk around the parks. This did not stop people; they would drive close to the park and park their cars on sides of roads and then walk in.

Along with the parks being closed most stores besides essentials ones were closed or could only do curbside pickup. Stores started limiting the number of customers into the stores, some required masks for everyone entering the store. Restaurants were doing curbside pickup or contactless delivery, everything changed. My mom started doing grocery pickups, anytime we had to go in somewhere for essentials we all wore masks and used hand sanitizer. We changed our clothes once we got inside our house to try to limit the exposure we had.

Everything in our typical lives changed. We could not see friends, go into stores to just walk around, sit down to eat at restaurants, visit family members, go on trips, or do anything "normal". Everything was basically online, friendships, learning, shopping, socializing. It is weird and we still do not know when it will end. At this point we have a stay at home order until June 10th. This is starting to affect summer jobs for college students. Personally, I work at a pre-school, so my job is in question. Nothing will be the same when this is all over and it is weird and scary to think about.