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Longwood: Life during COVID-19

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### Open Essay

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It is suspected that COVID-19, or the Coronavirus disease, began in late October of 2019. Although several countries, along with the United States, were not aware of the spread of this disease until January 2020, it has affected so many individuals, their jobs, and their families. Plans have been cancelled, graduations have been postponed, and classes have transitioned from in person to online for the remainder of the semester. Although a lot of anxiety, fear, and sadness has come from this pandemic, it has also played an incredibly positive role for my mental health.

I realize how insane that sounds, but please give me a second to explain. Several families, including my own, have been affected by this horrible disease, and I am in no way trying to minimize the severity of it. I understand that this has shaken a lot of people, and I have also experienced a fair share of anxiety since the pandemic began, but it has also helped me in ways I never would have imagined.

This past semester at Longwood University has been very difficult for me. There have been a lot of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges I have faced that have really taken a toll on my mental health. I really did need a break, but I had no idea that the break I would receive would cause so much grief for so many people. Throughout this semester, I felt like I was losing myself. I was very ashamed of myself, very insecure, and very sad. It's going to sound selfish, but I was so relieved when I was informed that we wouldn't be returning to campus for the rest of the semester.

Once it was confirmed that we wouldn't be returning to in-person classes at Longwood, I knew I needed to make my mental health a priority. I created a routine for myself, and for the most part, I have been sticking with it. Once I wake up in the morning, I go to my back porch to do some yoga. I have found it extremely helpful to be with nature right when I wake up, and I truly do believe that it sets the tone for the rest of my day. After I finish doing yoga, I make

breakfast. That's another thing I've really enjoyed about this quarantine; I eat breakfast every morning! Once I'm done eating, I do my chores. I like to make sure that my space is clean and clear, and I think it's done wonders for my mental health. Afterwards, I go back to the porch and do my workout for the day. Working does not only make me feel good physically, but it has also brought me so much joy. Once I'm done working out, I take a shower, make lunch, and start doing my homework. Once my homework is completed, I have the rest of the day to do whatever I want! That time usually consists of hanging out with my roommate, going on walks, or going through the Cookout drive-thru for M&M milkshakes.

This quarantine has also given me time to hang out with my roommate, Christina. Throughout the semester, we both have super busy schedules, so it's been hard to find time to spend together. We are quarantined together in our big house in Farmville, so naturally, we have grown really close. She is more like a sister to me now, and I am forever grateful for that. She has supported me through any struggles I have faced with my mental health, and she accepts me for who I truly am. Throughout my time at Longwood, I've felt like I needed to wear a mask in order to be accepted, but I don't need to do that anymore, and I truly believe I have Christina to thank for that. I am genuinely happy, which I haven't felt for a while.

Once again, I completely recognize that this pandemic has caused a lot of anxiety, fear, and sadness for several people, and I understand that staying home has caused a lot of boredom. However, I have chosen to find privilege within my boredom. I am thankful for my health, and I am thankful for the health of those around me. I am thankful for doctors, grocery store workers, and every other essential worker that has risked their life to provide an essential service. Finally, I am thankful that I feel like myself again. Although this pandemic has been negative in so many aspects, I have chosen to remain positive, and it's been incredibly encouraging.

