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Longwood: Life during COVID-19

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### Covid-19 Story

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My experience during the coronavirus has been nothing short of challenging. We had discussed in class between each other and our professors how it was spreading, where it was, and what was going on every day. Although, it was spreading and more and more people were getting it, we still had the mindset 'oh it won't happen to us' or 'it'll never reach here.' As the days and weeks continued, I remember seeing news articles and Facebook posts of universities and colleges closing. My roommate and I shared information back and forth, seeing schools close closer and closer to where we were, anticipating Longwood's next step.

Then Longwood University updated the students that they were cancelling in-person classes from Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> until Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup>. The school then again pushed classes online and back further until Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. During this time people were beginning to go home. I was a Resident Assistant at the time, so I stayed to help my community and team as other staff members started to go home creating a shortage in staff. It was difficult to stay because my job at Panda Express closed because of the school closing, which caused me to become financially short for bills. Next step, that changed things more than ever was when the school decided on to move all classes online for the rest of the semester.

I decided to leave Longwood on March 18<sup>th</sup> to go home, hoping to get a better work opportunity if I returned. I came back to Longwood and moved most of my stuff back home, but some of it remains until we gain further notice for moving out. Once I was home, I was out of work for a month. I applied to different jobs every day, but I was not getting anywhere. My parents offered to help, but it was a burden on them because they need money. There were rumors of stimulus checks, which did end up happening, but college students and their families never received anything. Luckily, Longwood decided to give students some money back to refund the lack of use on meal plans and housing. Of course, at the time there were rumors that Resident Assistants weren't receiving any money back like the rest of the students, so that weighed on my mind. It was a nice surprise to find that we were included in the bunch to receive money as well, especially during my time of financial distress.

I was still adjusting to online classes, while also trying to find things to do to pass time. I occasionally exercised, took walks, worked on assignments, and was constantly on my phone. I would go out grocery shopping seeing how different everything was now. Shelves were low, signs with new rules were put up, stickers saying we had to stand six feet apart, screens were placed between employees and customers, and most people were wearing masks. Occasionally arguing with my parents and siblings due to the feeling a lack of freedom. I was frustrated. I was cooped up in the house with my family, who I rarely see because I live at college and work on the weekends. I was so used to my independence, to working, to being able to leave and do what I wanted whenever I wanted. I missed my friends, my apartments, school, and work. My internship was cancelled, leaving me distraught. I don't know how I am going to replace it with all the credits I still must take in order for me to graduate on time next year.

I was sad because most of my friends were seniors, and that was supposed to be my last year with them. There were so many events coming up at Longwood. We planned to do so much, and all of it went down the drain. This is not how I wanted or thought I would be spending my junior year, which I'm sure nobody did.

I tried to remain updated with Virginia's governor's, Northam, announcements. Again, frustrated because I felt like the date to this being over was pushed back further and further, and I felt sympathy for those who were put out of business and those struggling with mixed emotions due to cancellations and isolation. I was feeling it all myself.

I finally received a call on April 9<sup>th</sup> asking if I was interested in working at Walmart. I accepted the job and moved from staying with my dad to with my mom, so I had a closer commute to work. My stepmother did not want me to work due to fear of coming into contact with those who had the virus, but I knew I needed the money. I started orientation on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. I started training behind people the very next day. I've been working in the evenings and on weekends while trying to get schoolwork done during the day. It is hard juggling online classes and work; even though, you think it would be easier considering I work two jobs and have class while I'm at school, it's not. As the semester is coming to an end, professors are piling more and more work on. I'm not sure if they feel the pressure to grade something, or if they just think the students need more things to do to replace what would have been class time.

Although this is a chaotic, stressful mess, there has been some good out of the situation. I received a job while many others could not. Myself and my family has remained healthy. I have managed to keep up with my schoolwork and my grades are really good. I recently started a relationship with my current boyfriend, who is helping me stay sane through all of this. Overall, I know things could be worse, and I am constantly trying to look at the bigger picture.