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Longwood: Life during COVID-19

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### Longwood is Long Gone

Cole Pillow

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## Longwood is Long Gone: Part 1

Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

It has been twenty-nine days since President Reveley sent out the infamous email that announced that “Longwood will move classes and assignments to a fully online format beginning today.” With those thirteen words, one man brought an entire institution to its knees. Despite the decision being made out of pure consideration for all parties involved with Longwood University, it still created an atmosphere like no other. Every single student handled it differently; freshman ignited the dorm building halls with cheers of joy while seniors flooded their apartments with tears. For some, this just meant an extended summer and spending more time at home. For others, this meant departing from the one place they have called home for nearly four years months in advance. Seniors didn’t only lose the rest of their last semester at Longwood; they lost the memories that were meant to be made during that time.

Student Government Association President, Haleigh Pannell, posted a photo on Instagram with the caption reading, “Even Though I’m Leaving x Luke Combs.” Over thirty comments poured in supporting Haleigh saying, “You better stop,” wrote Maeve McQuillan and, “This caption just broke me,” wrote Dana Joss. In that moment, many students, including myself, realized that this was actually happening. This virus was no longer something that was only affecting people thousands of miles away; it was affecting our small, two college town we call home. And as unfortunate as it is, we realized that this may just be the last time some of us see one another. For something so great to come to such an abrupt end with no time to process or morn, it really had a negative effect on people including myself.

Once I finally realized that this was actually happening to our college, I felt something I had never felt before (at least not at that magnitude). It was a mix of sadness, regret and

compassion all at once. I was sitting upright in my bed rereading the email from President Reveley over and over trying to make sense of the situation while people in the halls were screaming with joy. I was getting so many notifications on my phone from Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc. regarding the recent update. I felt like the world was starting to spin out of control and all I could do it sit and read an email and try to make sense of the situation. I still haven't quite grasped the full complexity of this situation and honestly, I'm not too sure I ever will. I do know, however, that millions of people's lives all over the world were changed during those 48 hours. It was no longer a distant problem, but an attack on our home. It was real, it was happening and there was not a thing we could do to stop it. I have never felt more hopeless in my entire life.

Days after the announcement, I started getting emails from my professors explaining how our new courses were going to operate. Originally, I was sure how I was going to sustain my schoolwork considering I do not have proper WIFI at home. Though, students were given the option to stay if they had a valid reason to. Well, they deemed my reason worthy and here I am twenty-nine days later. Everyone else is gone – there's not a soul in sight. I believe there is one other person living in Register, though I haven't seen him or her. I just see someone's car parked outside every day. I've been doing my best to social distance, but it began to affect my mental health. I needed some sort of social interaction if I wanted to make it through the entirety of the semester. I reached out to my big in Phi Mu Delta (RUSH PMD!) and we began spending more time together. We ended up going fishing a few times, we've watched so many movies and played so many different video games. Though, I am feeling better regarding my mental health. And honestly, I believe that this relationship I am building with my big is probably one of the only positive things coming from this shit-show we've been dealt.

Throughout this process, I will say one thing: Longwood University never fails to put their students first. The overwhelming amount of support from the faculty and staff has been so amazing. The administration has been so transparent throughout this entire process, too. We've all had questions regarding graduation, reimbursements for housing and meal plans, etc. and the administration has been right there with us. I will say it time and time again, Longwood cares about their students unlike any other college or university out there. Students attending VCU found out via social media that the school had packed up their belongs and placed them in a storage facility to make room for a makeshift hospital for infected patients. No warning was issued, no email was sent – it was a complete shit show. Students were livid, and rightfully so. Students from other universities have complained about getting little to no money back for meal plans, housing, etc. Though, Longwood is giving students who live on campus \$1,000 back and commuter students \$300 if they had a meal plan. Longwood continues to surpass any other university time and time again. If anything good comes from this situation, I hope that people realize how much our university cares for us and our needs.

As of now, I'm going to continue to write these journals to submit to the Greenwood Library to be added to the archives. I doubt anyone will read them, but hell, it isn't like I have anything else to do.

Sincerely,

Cole A. Pillow  
Longwood University Freshman Class President  
Class of 2023

