

May 8, 2020

What Are Your Learning & Personal Experiences in the Time of Coronavirus?

“Diary Entry #1: The Unexpected”

This pandemic was so abrupt, so unexpected. None of us could have prepared for something like this, mentally, emotionally, or physically. I remember seeing the article trend on twitter when the first case of the coronavirus outbreak in China appeared; I would have never thought it would get this extreme. It’s true what they say, that you don’t really think about the influence of something until it happens to you. Of course I was concerned for China and this new, unknown virus, but it was months until the United States actually addressed this.

It felt out of nowhere when I opened that email and read that classes were going to be cancelled for the rest of the week in order to prepare for online instruction. My first thought was “I was supposed to have a test tomorrow!” Immediately I wondered, was it going to be pushed back? Was it going to be proctored through a webcam? How am I gonna learn the same with just online lectures? All these thoughts running in my head illuminates the kind of stressful conditions COVID-19 has established. Because this is so new, no one had a clue how to answer questions like that. What *were* we going to do now? I can only imagine the stress my instructors went through trying to revise their schedules and syllabi. But I was so concerned about how my academics/education would suffer with this worldwide pandemic.

Going through a global pandemic as a college student really disrupted more than just classes. Our socialization was impacted, which meant not being able to meet with professors, advisers, tutors, etc for any additional help. Most of my professors addressed this situation appropriately, but others did not revise their lesson plan as much, which was outrageous. No one is in the same mindset they were pre-COVID-19! My productivity, and of many of my friends, surely suffered after being quarantined in the same apartment for weeks. I am not able to separate my leisure time with my work time, so it has been hard to feel motivated to work. I have to keep reminding myself that my low efforts and little motivation is a result of the mental challenges this pandemic has created, not because of my own doing. The best I can do is try as much as I can and to communicate with the people around me.

Although I have faced some difficulties in my productivity, it was certainly not the only challenge I endured. Soon after the email about online instruction was sent, I also thought about how it would affect my job. Why? Because I work on campus and our entire customer base are students and faculty walking around campus! Online instruction and this

quarantine, without a doubt, would affect business and hours. For a few days, we were only alerted to hours being reduced, but by the end of the week, it was announced that they would be doing a series of lay-offs at the 49er Shops. So unfortunately, COVID-19 conditions led to work loss, and it is hard to tell whether or not I can get it back for Fall semester. It's upsetting because I was not able to say goodbye to some of my coworkers who are graduating this year, and the disappointment did not stop there.

Losing my job of course caused other issues; I experienced food and basic necessity issues for a short period after losing my job. I went from having a consistent paycheck to nothing, which was a stressful position to endure while still in school. Luckily, I was able to take advantage of ASI's Beach Pantry drive through pop-ups and receive some free produce and meals; it was a great relief and I am so thankful to have this help getting back on my feet. I also filed for unemployment insurance to help with the bills until I am comfortable and healthy enough to work again.

Although I experienced all this stress and nervousness from this unexpected situation, I am appreciative of the support and understanding from (most) of my professors and family. I really learned from the pandemic that productivity does not define your worth. Mental health is the utmost priority because without addressing it, you struggle with everything else. Don't be disappointed in yourself for whatever academic or financial troubles you are enduring. We're all in this together. We were all taken by surprise, but we will all come out on the other side together and stronger.