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The COVID-19 discussion began on campus and word spread fast. Some students were scared, while others disregarded it and acted as though Coronavirus was just another type of influenza. I remember going to my Evidence Based Healthcare course twice a week and each time, the number of cases in the United States went up, without stopping. I was not sure what to believe at this point. I did not think of it as a big deal until I realized my senior year could potentially be coming to an end earlier than I had anticipated. Some of my professors were preparing while others were not sure what to do. Students were scared and professors were trying everything in their power to tell us that it was going to be okay. I will never forget looking at the numbers of confirmed cases and number of deaths worldwide growing rapidly. Those numbers struck me each time I looked at them. I will never forget looking at the numbers and feeling like something big was happening and there was nothing I could do to stop it. After the first few weeks of discussing COVID-19 in my classes, I found myself trying not to listen. There was so much misinformation surfacing and getting spread around. I knew it was in my best interest to be prepared for the worst but hope for the best. It was the only thing I could do to keep my sanity in check.

My feelings were numbed for months; I did not show sadness towards having to leave school until I had gotten home. President Cooper announced that our spring break was extended an extra week. This is when I knew. I knew there was no way I was going to be finishing my senior year on campus. That night we found out in the evening that spring break was extended, and my entire room was packed up by the next morning. Taking down the decorations from my wall hit me in a way that I could have never anticipated. Some of my roommates were much more hopeful than me and did not pack up a single thing to go home until the moment we were informed that we would not be coming back to campus. For me, I just knew. I knew that my

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senior year was being ruined by something that I did not even know the entire premise of. All I knew is that it was time for me to move on. As I carried my belongings out to my car, almost every student I passed said the same thing, “you really do not think we are coming back?” and I answered with the same, emotionless, “not at this rate.” I went home for spring break and ended up being able to go on a trip to Jamaica. I knew this was the last time I would have freedom to be in public with other individuals for a long time. As I returned home from my trip, that is when everything hit me. I finally realized how impactful this virus was on the entire world. I was scared and did not know what else to do than to break down and give up.

I have learned a large sum about myself throughout this entire experience so far. I have learned that in times of such uncertainty, I can get through it and come out stronger than when it began. My mindset has changed drastically over the past few months and I have become stronger for my family. It is not every day that I have to worry about something serious or life threatening happening to my family members. This experience has helped me and hurt me in a plethora of ways. The most difficult thing for me has been sitting at home alone, day in and day out, while my entire family continues to go to work. I am left at home worrying from the minute I wake up, until the minute my family members come home from work. My mother is a home infusion compounding pharmacist, my father is a state trooper, my brother is a firefighter at Logan Airport, and my sister is a nurse in the NICU. Although I am proud to say that my entire family is out there putting their own lives at risk to fight for the lives of others, I am scared. As they go into work each day, I pray that everything goes as planned and that nothing happens to them or the people they work with. I am unable to see my siblings during this time and it has been nearly impossible for me. To think that I cannot even come in contact with those who have been my biggest support systems for my entire life has crushed me both emotionally and physically. I

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have to take precautions at home to keep myself safe so that my parents can remain able to go into work. My entire life has been altered completely and I had no say in the matter.

One of the biggest things giving me joy during this pandemic has been social media and technology. Social media has played a major role for countless individuals during this time. I have been trying to avoid traditional news in order to diminish my risk of becoming disappointed or being exposed to incorrect news. Using things like Instagram, FaceTime and Zoom have given me a way to stay connected with my friends while also curating the information I hear about the pandemic. Social media and technology have been two of the only things, for a large part of the world, that is keeping individuals afloat. One of my closest friends at home stated that “TikToks are not saving lives, but they are entertaining people and making people laugh.” I never thought it would find myself saying this, but some of the only optimism being spread in the world right now has been through social media and technology.

My aunt has recently been diagnosed with ALS. She was one of the first individuals I thought of when I realized this is a big problem and I need to be worried. She cannot have nurses come to her house and she cannot go to her regular doctor’s appointments. My entire family as well as our entire community has been coming together, as best as we can, to provide support and comfort for her. Her children have had to learn how to use intravenous medication for her as just one of the many things they can do to help. It breaks my heart to know that all of the individuals in the world with preexisting medical conditions do not know what each day will bring for them.

A typical day in quarantine for me is very different from my usual days at home. I work out and stay active in hopes of keeping my mind off of things and I do work for school. I clean and disinfect the house for my parents so that they are able to go to work and feel safe when they

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come home. I have been cooking for my family to take pressure off my full-time working parents. As much as it has been slow and relaxing at home, I have not stopped doing work since leaving school. Some of my professors increased the course workload making it incredibly hard for me to complete my degree and be there for my family. That is one of the biggest things I miss about being on campus. Being able to go my office hours and get advice from my professors whenever I need it. Emailing back and forth is very different from going to Locklin Hall to get assistance on my assignments. As a student living with a disability that largely impacts my academic work, having the resources available on campus was always something I was incredibly grateful for. I do not think that I took these resources for granted, but I can say with complete confidence that I missed having them during the last few months of my senior year. Online learning was different and I truly missed being in a classroom setting, but I am proud to say I managed to finish college under such unprecedented circumstances.

I feel as though I am cultivating a large amount of resilience through this experience. It has been hard for me to stay hopeful and optimistic, but I know that my ability to recover and be strong for my family has grown drastically. I have learned how to become more independent and reliable at any moment. Each day, there is a new task for me to complete in order to keep my family safe. No matter if it is something big or something small, I get it done and try to keep an optimistic attitude. The real test of my resilience has yet to come. I am curious to see how I come back from this pandemic once it is all over. It will be hard for me to return to my normal ways once the world is opened back up, but I am hopeful that eventually I will be able to return to my pre-pandemic self at some point.

There have been so many impressive as well as disappointing responses to the pandemic over the past few months. I have been impressed, to an outstanding degree, by the way the entire

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Springfield College Senior class has come together to support each other during this time. I have gotten supportive remarks from some of my classmates that I have never even spoken to in person. The class of 2020 has become stronger than any other graduating class I have ever seen. This is not because of Coronavirus itself, but rather due to the way we reacted and the way I know we will come back from it. The night before we left campus was something I will never forget. We held a “senior day” for all of the spring senior athletes that were unable to have their own traditional senior day. We laughed, we cried, we danced and we hugged all night until the sun came up. This response to bad news was an experience that I know will be unmatched for the rest of my life.

In terms of disappointing responses to this pandemic, the one that has stuck out to me the most is the individuals in the world that feel as though they do not have to follow the guidelines put in place by the CDC. It saddens me to know that there are individuals out there that are still taking this too lightly. If I could show those individuals one thing, it would be the pictures of my family members, at work, covered head to toe with uncomfortable protective gear so as to keep themselves safe while saving the lives of others. Even if you are not experiencing the virus firsthand, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that this is a real problem and the only true way to combat it is to follow instructions and guidelines put in place by the government and the CDC.

There are many fears that have been running through my mind over the course of this pandemic. One that has been scaring me the most is what life is going to look like for the few years following Coronavirus. I planned to take a year off after college to get a job and then go to graduate school. Although my plan has remained the same, it has become much more difficult to follow through with it. Finding a job has been nearly impossible. On top of this, studying to get

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into graduate school looks very different. There are far less resources for students to utilize. I have finally accepted the fact that I have completed my courses and graduated college in the same home that I started preschool in, and I will most likely be studying and applying to graduate school from home as well. The community has been forced to adapt to the current state of the world at a rapid pace, something that not everyone is accustomed to, but also something we have been forced to do. I have realized that my fears are different from those of others but everyone's fears are justifiable. No one should be thinking that they are not allowed to be scared because someone else may have it much worse than them. We are going through this together and we will remain hopeful together. My greatest hopes for the future begin right now. I hope that individuals do not give up. I hope that we remain connected and bond in a way that we have never bonded before. It is us against one single virus. I want individuals, worldwide, to know that we can come back from the current situation we are in.

In the near future, I predict that the world will be unable to completely return to life pre-pandemic. Individuals will remain scared and worried that something bad is going to happen again. Businesses will be impacted while employees will continue to lose their jobs. On the other hand, I feel as though we will continue to come together as a community and stay connected. In the long-term, I predict that the world will create a new norm for a while. Life might not be the exact same as it was before the Coronavirus outbreak, but it will begin to feel more normal as the days go on.

If the Coronavirus pandemic could teach the world one thing it would be to open your eyes and see the underlying problems that are surfacing due to the pandemic. There are so many problems in this country that many individuals would not be privy to if it were not for Coronavirus. The individuals and families that are being immensely impacted are the ones that

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were struggling the most before this pandemic hit. Keep an optimistic attitude, follow instructions carefully, and remember that we will get through this. Each day will come and go with new challenges to face and new problems to fix. This is just one experience, out of so many, that will make the world stronger and better prepared for what is to come in the future.

**Photos of my family at work during COVID-19:**

