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A Student's Take on Covid-19

April 8, 2020

written by Emilee Saigh, Public Relations Senior

Unprecedented Times

We keep seeing it in the news, in university-wide emails, on social media, and everything in between. These are “unprecedented times.” Somehow it makes it all seem even more daunting than it already is.



Emilee Saigh (right) and her mom enjoying a walk together.

I'm a 22-year-old college senior. I was supposed to walk in Paulson Stadium in May and ceremoniously celebrate all of the hard work that my peers and I put in these last four-ish years. But now things are different. Classes are all online. Graduation is virtual along with orientation and meetings and seeing loved ones. At first it was all too much to handle. As someone who believed they handled change well, I was not handling it well at all. It's been a learning experience and a growing experience, but what's gotten me through is that I'm not alone.

Let me preface the rest of this piece by saying that as a rational, college-educated human, I am completely cognizant that all of the shutdowns, online switches, and weeks of isolation are for the greater good. While I might not get severely sick, my grandma could, my significant other could, and thousands more who have preexisting conditions and health issues that make them part of the “vulnerable” population could. So, yes I'm disappointed and overwhelmed (and I might have cried a few times), but I recognize that this is all in the name of effectively saving others' lives.

So how are we getting through this? If you would have asked me two months ago what I thought the latter half of March and beginning of April would look like, I would have said that I would be giving campus tours and working on admissions events and making some final memories with the people I love most in the place I love most. For

Chanel Leiva, she would have told you that she would be working in the adult health clinical rotation and continuing to get hands-on experience as part of our prestigious nursing program. McClain Baxley would have told you that he would be writing for the Savannah Morning News and going to sporting events and hanging out with his friends. And Maria Rampaly would have told you that she would be finishing up her first year as a Georgia Southern Eagle, practicing the cello and piano, and being one of the brightest new tour guides the Southern Ambassadors have ever seen. For myself and these three students, this time looks different, but we're making it through.

Baxley is a senior multimedia journalism major. He has been published in many different media outlets in Georgia and has had national media coverage on his work as the editor of the George-Anne during the book burning events that took place on the Statesboro campus. During these unprecedented times, he has been cooking for his family, supporting his sister, a high school senior, and working on stepping away from

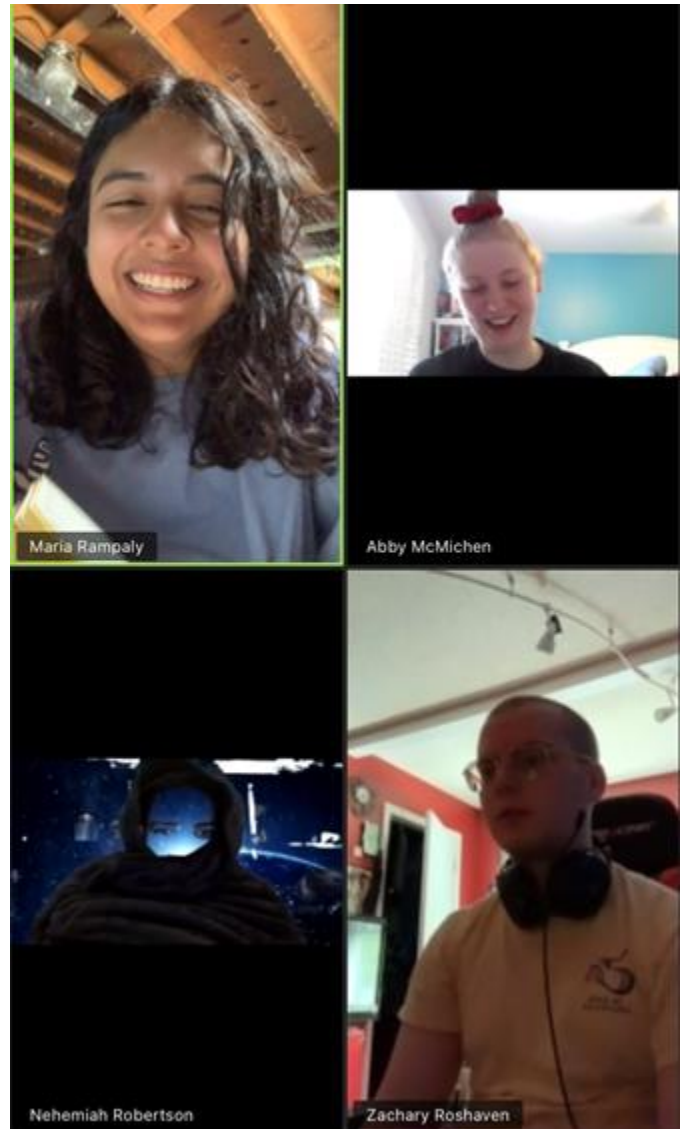
technology and all of the negativity circulating social media. Stepping away from his busy schedule has left him with more time to focus on himself and his goals. He said, “I need to graduate by next May. That’s my biggest goal so that’s been a huge motivator [during this time].”

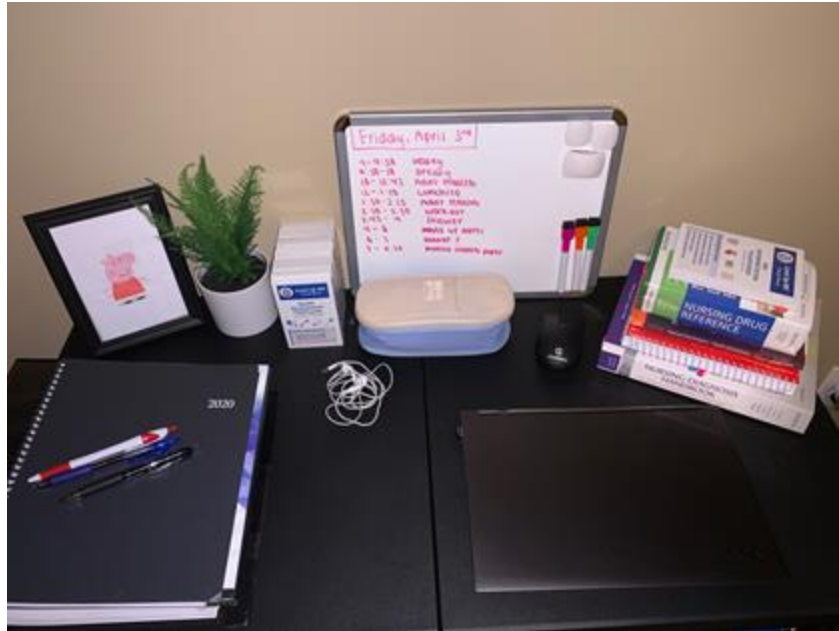
Staying motivated hasn’t been the easiest for Rampaly, a freshman music education major. “I feel like I’m forcing myself to be motivated since the fun stuff that happens in college [is] gone, and now there is only school work,” she said. She has found that trying to stick to a somewhat normal routine has helped her stay on top of things. By doing her work when her classes would normally meet, she’s hoping that her motivating factor of keeping up her GPA will continue to drive her to make the grades. Rampaly has also taken advantage of Netflix Party and FaceTime to be able to watch movies and see her people.

Maria Rampaly and friends practicing social distancing.

A topic that has been discussed during the closures and stay-at-home orders is mental health. This is something that I, along with many other college students, struggle with. It’s even more important during this time of social distancing and constant access to social media to take care of ourselves. For me, some ways that I practice self-care include being intentional with the activities I do for myself and taking time for me. For those of us who are spending this time with our families, it’s important to remember that you also need to spend time with yourself. Whether it be going for a run like Baxley and myself do, or facetimeing with loved ones as Rampaly does, or maintaining some semblance of normalcy as Leiva does, it’s important to take care of you too.

Leiva is a junior nursing major and a resident advisor at one of our residence halls. She, along with many others, has recently experienced the massive change of no longer having a job or a place to live in Statesboro causing her to immediately move home for the rest of the school year. In this change, keeping a routine has helped Leiva’s mental state. She said, “I’m someone who thrives off of structure, and online classes give me way too much wiggle room.” To combat this, Leiva makes a daily schedule of tasks to accomplish but adjusts when needed. Her two younger siblings are her biggest motivation in these unprecedented times. She has stepped up to be the role model for them and encourages study sessions as well as self-care sessions to make sure everyone is doing okay and still getting their work done.





Chanel Leiva's workspace.

I think that for all of us college students who are trying to navigate what online classes look like, how to stay motivated and productive, and just keeping it all together, we need to extend some grace to ourselves. I have had to come to the realization that this is just one of the many things happening right now that I can't control, but I can control how I react and adapt to it. I have started to take walks and regularly exercise (because I have time now). I have spent more time outside working and doing school work than I would have before all of this, and I have spent more time with my family. Being grateful for the little things is something that I am more conscious of now because all of my "lasts" are gone. I've already had my last sporting event, my last campus tour, my last coffee dates, organization meetings, and hangouts with my friends. If these unprecedented times have taught me anything, it's to be grateful and here for the now. Live in the moment. Take in each Tik Tok, home-cooked meal, walk, video game session, or whatever it is you're doing to get through this. Enjoy it. Stay home. And take care of yourself.

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