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Life During Quarantine: One student shares experience



By Claire Allen

On Friday, August 28, 2020, Gardner-Webb University released their weekly update on the status of coronavirus cases on campus. The posts said, "Gardner-Webb has no (zero) confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on campus." Later that evening, my suitemate told the rest of us that one of her classmates tested positive.

Immediately, worry set into us all.

Endless questions tumbled through our minds. What would we have to do? Were we at risk? Were our families at risk because some of us had gone home? For a few days, all of these questions went unanswered.

Sunday afternoon, I returned to school after a quick visit home. From the moment I got back to the time when we all went to bed, the only topic of conversation was Covid-19. All our families knew by now and every one of us was preparing, mentally and physically, for the worst.

The next afternoon, we each got a phone call with the inevitable news of our required quarantine.

Every member of the suite had the choice to remain at school for the following fourteen days or to go home. Despite some second guessing, five of us ended up deciding to stay at school together and were lucky enough to be able to remain in our suite for the two weeks.

The transition was immediate and sudden. Our professors received emails about our inability to leave the suite, and we were quickly transferred online. In a matter of hours, our entire college experience was flipped on its head.

Tuesday morning, we attended our first classes online. Despite best efforts made by our professors, being the only person on a Zoom meeting while the rest of the class is in the classroom was an alienating experience. By the second day, we spent more time in the common room in comfortable silence that was occasionally broken by a corny joke or the request for help on homework.

We developed a routine as the days passed. We did our schoolwork in the common room and took breaks for lunch and dinner. We ate together and watched nostalgic TV shows together. We spent our time in the evenings watching movies, playing games and enjoying the company of one another.

Over the course of quarantine, as expected, motivating ourselves became a challenge. Procrastination was common and difficult to get past. Staying on track with homework and classwork proved to be a challenge as many subjects and assignments tended to blur together.

As we neared the end of quarantine, our focus shifted from current homework to what would have to be done in order to transition back into our regular routine of going to classes in person. There was constant uncertainty as to when exactly we would be allowed to leave, which further complicated our efforts to not fall behind in classes.

Now, having been released from quarantine, life is still difficult to navigate. I find I constantly have to remind myself that it is okay to stand outside on the balcony and that I can walk to the student center to get lunch instead of surviving on food brought to me or what I could make in our suite. After making jokes to family and friends on the phone about what the "outside world" has been like while I was stuck inside, it is strange to see it for myself.

After over two weeks of quarantine, I look forward to getting back to what was normal before it began.

