

My COVID-19 Perspective

Hi there, my name is Jack Gardner, a 5th year student at Purdue University. The COVID-19 pandemic is truly what we describe as a “Black Swan” event, meaning that no-one could have predicted it happening, but the impact it has on society is profound. Over 100,000 people have lost their lives to this horrible disease, unemployment is at its highest it has been since the great depression, and everyone has been challenged to adapt to a new lifestyle which many still disagree with. Long after the pandemic is over, life as we know it will most likely change forever. Today, I am writing this short reflective essay to share my thoughts and experience during the worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic. I believe it is very beneficial to gain insight from multiple perspectives on the current situation.

To start, I want to explain my thoughts and experience regarding my academic lifestyle changes as a result of the pandemic. When Purdue University announced that they would hold instruction online for the remainder of the semester, I wasn't as affected as some of my peers. Throughout my college career, I have become accustomed to taking around 1-2 online classes per semester. Going into the new academic lifestyle, I already had an idea on how to properly plan around this situation. For many others though, this new lifestyle didn't necessarily sit well. While the main reason behind the switch was due to student and faculty safety, many students were concerned that moving class instruction online would not provide the same educational benefits of a class being taught in person. Honestly, from someone who has taken both online and in-person classes, I can agree with this sentiment. I truly believe having in-person instruction provides more benefits than online coursework. I was glad to hear that for the upcoming Fall Semester that Purdue had provided the framework to reopen the university. Obviously, there has been some concern over this plan, especially in regards to the safety of everyone. Do I agree with all parts of the plan to re-open the university, of course not. In the back of mind, I do find it concerning that bringing back people from all parts of the world too fast could result in very negative outcomes. However, I believe that having the highest quality education is essential to have and I believe it is necessary to provide students the option to receive in-person instruction as long as it is done in a safe manner.

Next I want to talk about how I connect with others during times of “social distancing”. Honestly, it's hard not being able to connect with everyone I know and love everyday. College is a signal of independence and having the ability to socialize stripped away so suddenly was very difficult for me to cope with. I was fortunate to still have my roommates living with me during the duration of the quarantine so I wasn't in complete isolation, but it hasn't been easy. One of the best methods I found that has kept me close to my pals I cannot see face to face is playing video games on my Xbox. Having the ability to play videogames with my friends allowed me to still socialize and keep up with them without exposing ourselves to each other. The biggest

takeaway from the new social distancing practices is that it is really important to keep in touch with the ones you love. Being away and in complete isolation only detracts your mental health. I've also learned that through this pandemic that you need to cherish every single day on Earth and just remember to count your blessings.

Finally, I want to explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected me from a social standpoint. As someone who was raised by white parents but is Korean, I know first hand what it is like to be wrongly judged based on my race. Though I'm not one to be hurt by misjudgements, there have been times where people have looked at me in a funny way, especially when I am around my adopted parents, even though they have no idea who I am as a person. It is human nature to place implicit bias on certain groups of people. With the COVID-19 originating from China, many Asian Americans are judged as if they are all disease ridden and the reason why we are in this bad of a situation, myself included. Outside of being born in South Korea, I have never stepped one foot into the country of Asia, yet for many, I'm just another "one of them". It's unfortunate that it has come to this because by no means should Asian Americans have to be subject to ridicule. As the new school year comes around this fall, I anticipate that the world will be still dealing with the pandemic. I fear that international students from Asia will be subject to racist comments and possibly even hate crimes by those who are very radical about the situation. I hope it doesn't come to this, but I'm preparing to always having to be associated with COVID-19.

I want to conclude my paper by saying to all that need to hear it is that don't hope. Have faith that we will all get through this together. Mankind has experienced so many obstacles we have had to come throughout our history. It is important to recognize that this situation is not one to be taken lightly. Everyone in some way shape or form has had their livelihood changed by this pandemic and it doesn't seem to have a clear end in sight. In a country that is so divided, it is so critical that we put our differences and opinions aside and come together as human beings. No one person is immune to or bigger than the situation. There is an extremely fine line of fear and ignorance taking over our logic and we cannot let it be crossed. We will defeat COVID-19 together and we will be stronger from it.