



Spring 2021

## Freshman Interviews Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Interview Response of Rylie Driscall, Freshman

1. You probably had expectations for your first year in college that changed as COVID-19 progressed. What were your expectations of college prior to the pandemic?

I think my expectations for college were pretty common to most other freshmen--I was looking forward to an education experience that would take me beyond the routine of high school level classes, I was excited to meet new people, both people who I shared much in common with and people from walks of life that I have never experienced. Perhaps stereotypically, I had this image in my head of living in the dorms, walking to the cafe for meals, talking with professors between classes, meeting with friends to study and hang out. Typical expectations for an atypical year!

2. How has online learning impacted your overall attitude towards continuing your education?

Learning online has made me even more determined to continue my education in person. I feel a bit like I have been given a spoonful of the best food I've ever eaten, but I can't have more than that until next year. Many of the courses I've taken so far have been incredible--they're challenging, enlightening, and engaging, and some days it seems like I can feel my brain changing as it rewires pathways to incorporate everything I've learned.

However, my full appreciation for college education feels out of reach. I love to learn, but some of my favorite subjects--math and science--are incredibly challenging for me, and without an in person format I am often left floundering to understand or reflect my understanding of the material. There have been several times this year where I was close to abandoning my biology major or even just giving up on taking scientific courses at all.

Constant screen time does not bloom a balanced mindset, I've found. I am thankful for the amazing courses I have taken that have convinced me to keep pushing through my school work, with the hope that next year things will be better.

3. Were any of the resources provided by the college (tutorials, workshops, etc.) helpful to you during this time?

I'm not sure if this counts, but the one meeting I did find helpful was the poetry slam put on by the Office of Equity and Inclusion. I don't believe the poetry slam is a resource, but I found a lot of strength and excitement in a space where art could be shared during a time when we are unable to meet in person. Besides that, I didn't attend any other meetings through the college.

4. How has the pandemic impacted your learning, either positively or negatively?

Overall, I don't think the pandemic has had a largely positive or negative effect on my learning. There are undoubtedly difficulties with virtual learning, and I have not enjoyed the experience as a whole, but it has given me a new perspective on the importance of in person education. There is a unique ease of

learning when a class and professor can engage in a physical environment which cannot be replicated in a digital one.

5. What are your feelings about returning to campus in fall 2021?

I'm really excited! I am also nervous, however, since the risk of getting sick and getting others sick is still very present. But even so, I've been looking forward to the college experience for a long time and the idea of actually stepping foot on campus this fall has me a little giddy. I trust Whittier will do everything they can to make sure students and faculty stay safe when we return to campus!

(Optional) Please provide any supplemental information you think was valuable to your experiences with COVID-19 at Whittier College (help from professors, more flexible grading, etc.