

On March 13, 2020, Governor Gina Raimondo announced that all Rhode Island schools would shut down for two weeks and do distance learning due to the rise in coronavirus cases. I remember sitting in seventh period when one of my teachers made the announcement not knowing that would be the last time I ever set foot in that classroom and that my senior year of high school had been derailed. As coronavirus cases continued to rise, I saw fear spread throughout the state, country, and the world as this new virus made everything come to a standstill. I watched all the things I was looking forward to (prom, graduation, senior activities, college orientation) all turn virtual or be cancelled. My mother was forced to turn our kitchen table into her office, my sister returned from college, our bedrooms became classrooms, and my father's job as a firefighter turned essential. Everyday my father left for work we feared for his safety and prayed that all the preventative measures put in place would be enough to protect him from this deadly virus that was spreading like wildfire.

As the months of quarantine dragged on, I missed my friends and everything we had looked forward to at the end of our senior year. As phases of reopening started to be announced, there was hope of having a somewhat normal summer before my departure to college. My friends and I became creative in finding ways to make the most of our last summer together including meeting up in a parking lot and talking from our cars to follow social distancing. My family did their best to plan parties to celebrate all the milestones everyone had reached while keeping with the capacity limit on social gatherings. As college approached, there was more uncertainty surrounding what my first semester would look like. Starting college was nerve wracking enough but having start to start college in the middle of a pandemic was a monster no one had conquered before. With masks and social distancing rules in place, I started college trying to make friends from a 6-foot distance and with colorful masks that covered half of people's faces. It has been a struggle living through this pandemic, but my hope and faith in God has kept me going and will continue to sustain me until we reach the end.