

I remember being thrilled when I got my acceptance letter to SJSU. As someone who has tried to go to college several times over the past 18 years but has had to drop out due to personal hardships, this was the beginning of a lifelong dream come true. My health and financial situation had finally come to a place where I felt that obtaining a degree was possible.

You probably think that what I am going to say next is that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed yet another roadblock in my way, but the exact opposite is true. Let me explain.

I am married and also a mother to a 2nd grader and 5th grader. The only way that I can afford to go to SJSU is by working part time as well. This being said, my husband makes enough money so that I do not qualify for any financial aid. Juggling classes, work and children has been extra challenging for the past few years, but I have been determined.

The thing that made me almost drop out, however, was that many of the classes I needed to take would require my children to go to after school care. Given the high cost of child care, this is simply not an option for our family.

The reason I have hope now to finish my degree in the next year? The coronavirus. Classes next semester will be mostly online. This means I can afford to go to school because I do not have to pay for childcare.

I feel that middle class families fall through the cracks in higher education, especially with the high costs of living in California. You can make enough money to not qualify for aid, but then you also cannot afford to go to college.

My heart is saddened by all the lives lost and tragedies that this virus has caused and will cause. My hope in all this, however, is that it will expose areas in higher education and in all areas of society that need improvement, such as the need for more financial aid opportunities for students.

I am relieved this week, having finished all my final exams for the Spring semester. My thoughts begin to turn to what the Fall semester might look like, possibly of the chaos of housework, online classes, and homeschooling my kids—a repeat of the past few months. Not easy, not ideal, but possible.