



March 27, 2020. Last day in Campus Village B dorm room 1534 at SJSU. Photo: Alyson Chew

Monday, March 9, 2020. The day my career abruptly ended at San Jose State University by one single email. In January, I walked back onto campus knowing it was my final semester at SJSU since I was graduating in May. I created a bucket list of things I needed to do before I graduated to make the most of my college experience. Some things were simple like go to a San Jose Sharks hockey game while others were random like pet a squirrel on campus. I planned to return to my hometown of Elk Grove, south of Sacramento, when I graduated so I needed to complete my bucket list before moving home. However, everything changed on March 9, 2020.

We had heard the rumors in December and January, but the COVID-19 cases were in China. We had laughed at the beginning of Spring semester that it would spread across the Pacific Ocean...and then it did. When the first case was reported in Washington it became a reality. I started noticing small changes like people wearing masks and being conscious in public in February. However, I didn't think about buying masks because I didn't believe that it would affect me. Then, at 5 pm on March 9th we received an email from SJSU. They said that class was suspended for the rest of the week because a person in Santa Clara County had died of COVID-19. Living in the dorms people became excited that they didn't have to go to school anymore. The email also said that the rest of March instruction will be "distributed" or "fully

online.” I translated it as I can go home and do school work in the comfort of my house and everything will go back to normal at the beginning of April after spring break. Was I wrong.

In the following days after I left, more cases and deaths appeared throughout the Bay Area. SJSU was very diligent and addressed the cases. The County decided to enact a Shelter-In-Place to reduce the contact of people and risk of spreading the disease. SJSU began cancelling major events with more than 50 people to follow new County guidelines. One of the major events was supposed to take place in April that I had spent all year planning: Admitted Spartans Day, where prospective incoming freshmen and transfers were able to visit campus for a huge event. In one email it was cancelled. The main one-million dollar question that was on every senior’s mind: What about graduation? That question was also answered by email. It was “postponed” until further notice. In following emails we have been invited to participate in Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 commencement ceremonies.

Reading that graduation was “postponed” was a difficult pill to swallow. I had spent four years leading up to this moment to celebrate with friends and family and it was taken away in one email because of one virus. After that, I realized that there was no reason to be paying for an apartment on campus that I didn’t use. On March 27 I drove my car down and packed up my dorm room in a few hours. I wasn’t able to visit my favorite restaurants and boba shops as I left because they were closed and I was afraid of bringing the virus back to my family.

Although this virus will be contained at some point in time, I won’t be able to create memories of my final semester of college at SJSU. However, I am grateful for the memories I have. COVID-19 has changed the present as we know it, but has also altered the future. It has negatively affected the economy and has created a stronger reliance on technology. However, hopefully once people no longer need to social distance and stay 6 feet apart from each other they will have a greater appreciation for human contact.