

Spartans Speak on COVID-19

Undergraduate Experience

Every single individual possesses the qualities that they are proud of, but what makes one unique compared to other individuals? As a first-generation low-income college student, the unforeseen health issue regarding the COVID-19 pandemic impacted my undergraduate experience in ways that I could never have imagined. The pandemic especially influenced my perspective about real-life circumstances as a public health major. One of the most significant aspects of Public Health is the collaborative work between individuals in a positive environment to ensure the safety of the community. During the pandemic, it was necessary to reflect on the effects that the Santa Clara County officials were able to achieve as leaders of the community and enforce adequate social distancing guidelines in a short manner of time. What I love most about public health is the fact that I am passionate about helping individuals who need assistance with colleagues who also share the same passion. I believe that it is important to target the basic necessities of a community based on equality, accessibility, and adequate care. This allowed me to focus on understanding different cultural backgrounds to avoid bias judgments as well as gaining learning opportunities in the future.

Professional Career

The collaborative work among a group of individuals is an important form of relationship to exchange innovative ideas while also resolving any conflicts in a compassionate manner. I would describe myself as an introverted individual, however I have gained an understanding of stepping out of my comfort level by working in more collaborations in a group dynamic with individuals who share the same passion as me in the public health field. I chose to pursue a degree in public health because the field has shaped me into an individual who can freely express

myself with other individuals who possess different ethnic backgrounds while also learning about the nature of team building. This allowed me to understand that it is important to demonstrate specific qualities in the professional setting such as strengthening one's interpersonal skills through expressing their own ideas, listening to any concerns from their colleagues, and resolving any conflicts that were an obstacle towards the end goal. These interactions made the experience of collaborating on a common goal more enjoyable and memorable for myself to improve on different skill sets and be more prepared to provide adequate care to patients when I step into the health professional setting. This made me appreciate the dedication that every individual demonstrates while working together to improve the basic needs of individuals as well as establishing implementation changes to decrease the health disparities among different communities, especially minorities in society.

Volunteer Experience

Low-income families in the community are especially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as there were limitations to receive resources that were unavailable to the public. I decided to volunteer at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experience was empowering because I had the ability to support the community by using my background in public health to demonstrate my knowledge and skills in real-life circumstances. Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is one of the largest food banks that provide food to families in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties every month and aims to join forces to make sure everyone can access the most basic needs. The non-profit organization inspired me during the COVID-19 pandemic because it is committed to support the community by ensuring that anyone who needs a healthy meal can get one by distributing nutritious food to nearly every neighborhood in Silicon Valley. It was a valuable experience to provide my support by leveraging every available

food resource and collaborating with individuals who share the belief that nutritious food is the foundation for a healthy and productive life during a pandemic.