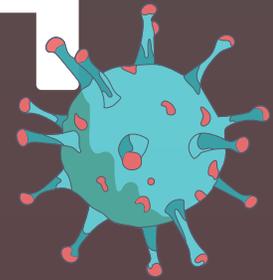


OUR HARSH REALITY

WORDS B. BAUERMEISTER
DESIGN K. MATTOCKS
ILLUSTRATION N. MEINS

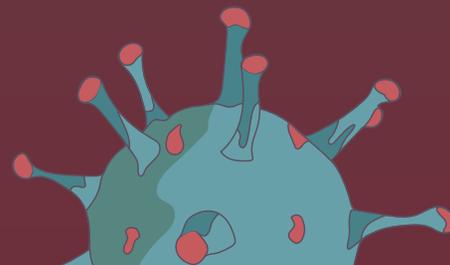


College students across the nation faced a strange and seemingly ever-changing set of circumstances during the pandemic. The impact was particularly intense for first-year students, many of whom struggled to build social and communal ties.

Due to the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, the 2020-21 school year was one of endless adaptations to ever-changing rules and regulations at campuses across America. These changes especially impacted first-year students, some of whom had an “almost normal” experience at least at some points during the year. For others, their entire first-year experience was upended from start to finish.

“Students are having difficulty adjusting and creating a sense of belonging,” said Ann Lopezlira, a psychologist in Phoenix who has more than a decade of experience in counseling. “The first semester is always a hard time for students. They are away from home, in a new setting, adjusting to college courses and trying to make new friends, so that can feel quite overwhelming.

“I have regularly seen and personally experienced the hard transition to college, but the added social regulations that schools and our nation as a whole have established make this even harder for students.”



Dan Shoemaker, who has worked at the University of Phoenix for nearly 15 years as an enrollment representative, sees students dealing with the pandemic differently. “Many students have realized attending online has been beneficial for them, removing distractions and allowing them to avoid social issues they may have had to deal with. For other students, they are experiencing loneliness and depression,” said Shoemaker.

Despite the struggles to build connections, Shoemaker believes there is a silver lining in the different options now available to some students. “Housing situations and how students fare in school are dependent on many variables. Living at home can offer a source of stability, but depending on the parents, can limit social experiences. Living on campus offers more freedom but still has some supervision. Living off campus can be a free-for-all,” said Shoemaker. “The main thing is the student and what they want from their education.”



Rachel Rysso
Art History



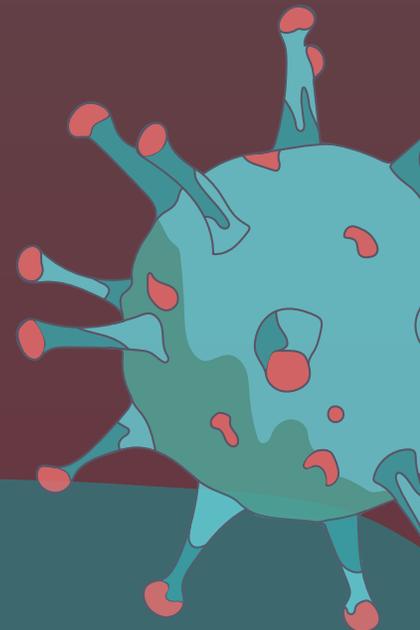
Stephan Silva
Mechanical Engineering



Alexander Salonga
Film Production

The College Crisis Initiative, a research project at Davidson College in North Carolina, found that about 1,000 colleges around the nation brought students back to campus to start fall classes in-person in some form. Other universities, including LMU, had partial or complete closures of their campuses. These disparities in colleges’ responses created stark differences in student life across the nation.

continued on next page



HOW ARE YOU SOCIALIZING DURING THE PANDEMIC?

“Mostly FaceTime! I’ve done a couple of distanced get togethers with people who are close to me too (like hanging out in the trunks of our own cars near each other in a parking lot).”

KARINA ARENAS
STUDIO ARTS

“I don’t. I work full time with school, so if anything, going to work is my social life, as of now.”

LEKEM AMSAL
SOCIOLOGY

“I work at East Los Angeles College. I go live on our Instagram page and live chat with students. I answer questions about the onboarding process, scholarships, etc.”

DANIELA AVILES
ENGLISH

“Through social media.”

LULU ALKHALIDI
POLITICAL SCIENCE

3 DIFFERENT COLLEGES, 3 DIFFERENT REALITIES

A baseball player whose season and in-person classes were canceled before they could begin. An athlete who was living on-campus but got sent back home to quarantine. A marketing major struggling to make friends without being able to set foot on her campus.



Mason Francis
El Paso Community College
El Paso, Texas

MASON FRANCIS, A FIRST-YEAR student at El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas, committed to play baseball at EPCC in January 2020. "I decided to go to El Paso Community College because it felt like it was the right fit for me. I wanted to go out on my own and not just stay home all the time. I kind of want to be by myself," said Francis. Before COVID-19 hit, he had signed up to live in baseball housing with his teammates. But his baseball season was canceled and classes were moved online. Francis moved back home.

Before the pandemic, Francis' life was consumed by baseball. "I used to practice pretty much every single day. And now I'm practicing every two to three days because I have so much online school, then I have to go practice and try to do that on my own. It's just chaos sometimes," he said. His online classes, coupled with his need to stay in playing shape, proved difficult.

Many of Francis' teammates from high school went away to play at colleges all over the country. With his former teammates gone and his current baseball season postponed, Francis is left alone. "I can't tell you the last time I've seen some of my friends. Most of my friends are out at college, and I'm here still. I still have a couple of friends I hang out with, but they're mostly my brother's friends. It's kind of sad," he said.



KATIE HUMBURG
Wayne State College
Wayne, Nebraska

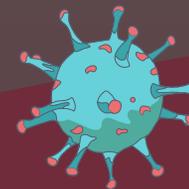
KATIE HUMBURG IS A FIRST-YEAR student at Wayne State College in Wayne, Neb., where she plays softball. Humburg's college offered in-person classes and student housing, so she lived in an on-campus dorm with a roommate and teammate. Then, a COVID-19 outbreak changed everything.

"One of my teammates tested positive, so the entire team had to quarantine. And since the designated quarantine rooms at my school filled up really quickly, they asked anyone that could drive home to go home," the Wisconsin native said. "So, since I live about six hours from school, I decided to come home." Humburg tested negative for COVID-19 but was still required by her school to quarantine for two weeks.

Although some students in other regions of the country are having a college experience that approximates normal, Humburg's experience shows the downside of what being on-campus can look like.

"The big thing probably is that we can't party and stuff because our coaches are super strict about that for obvious reasons," she said. Because of the limitations imposed by her sport and lack of COVID-19-friendly social events, she was unable to create a sense of community that she has been wanting. "There are no events where you would normally meet people, so I pretty much just hang out with softball people and a couple of people on the baseball team. There are no social events except for parties, and obviously we can't go to those right now."

"It's kind of sad to think about how much of a social life I had in high school and then now in college, it's like, nonexistent," she added, seeming to sum up the feeling of many college students around the nation.





Tait Thompson, right, was determined to get the most of her first year attending LMU. Thompson found a house on Zillow and used social media to find three roommates, including Kirsten Peterson (above left with Thompson on Melrose Ave.).

"IT'S BEEN REALLY WEIRD WITH MEETING FRIENDS. IT IS DEFINITELY THE THING THAT HAS MOST IMPACTED MY DAY-TO-DAY LIFE."

TAIT THOMPSON

Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

TAIT THOMPSON, A FIRST-YEAR Marketing major at LMU, also had a far-from-normal first year at college. Because of Los Angeles County mandates, LMU drastically limited its on-campus housing and prohibited most students from setting foot on campus. This left most first-year students, including Thompson, on their own in terms of finding housing.

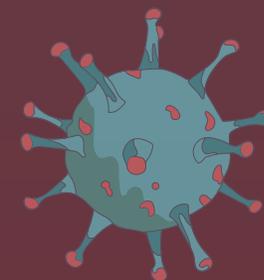
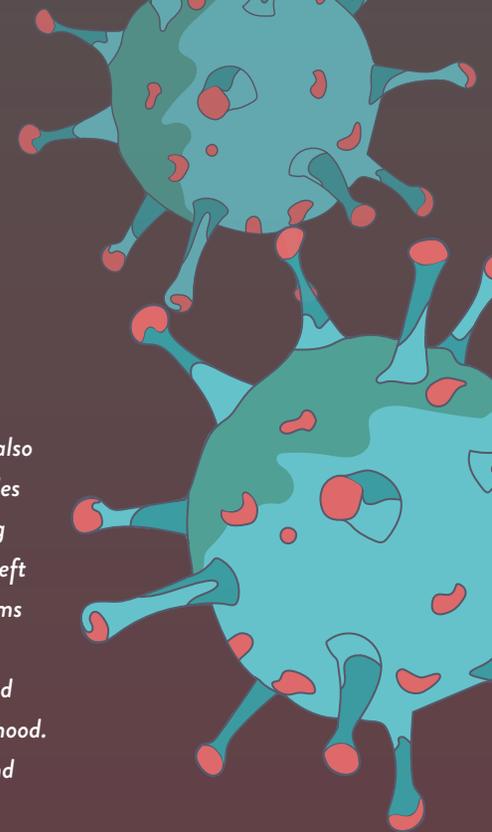
Many students chose to live at home, but Thompson decided that she wanted to live near campus in the Westchester neighborhood. Thompson is privileged to come from a socio-economic background that allows her to afford to live on her own.

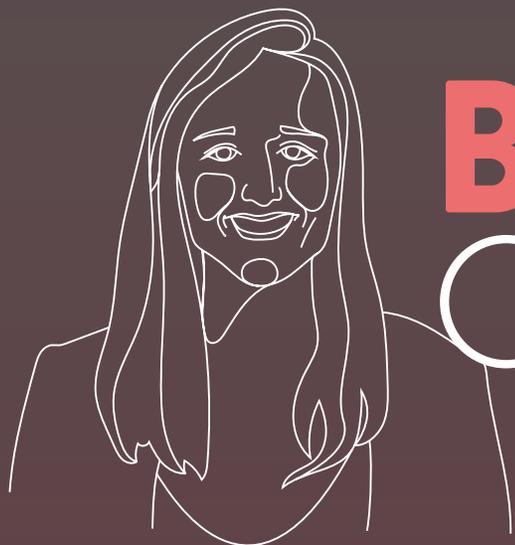
"I just went on Zillow and found a house, and it was really easy. I'm happy that I'm doing this rather than doing anything else," Thompson said. Once she inked the lease, Thompson took to Instagram and the incoming freshman Facebook page to find three roommates to live in the rental with her. They moved into the house in August.

Thompson spent a fair amount of time adjusting to her living situation and trying to create a community for herself. "It's been really weird with meeting friends. It is definitely the thing that has most impacted my day-to-day life," she said. "I've met girls, primarily through messaging this girl from my class who seemed normal and nice. I got dinner with her and her roommates, and then I met a couple of girls from that. It's just kind of a weird networking tree of meeting people. Then there is also feeling a little bit like I shouldn't be meeting all these people."

Thompson struggled between wanting to socialize in order to have a "normal" college experience and needing to practice social distancing. She also feels the pressure to prove to people that she is having a fun time due to a sense of competition among first-year college students to show that they love their adult life.

"My roommate and I were talking about how all of her friends from high school go to Texas schools and have basically no regulations, are living in dorms, rushing [Greek houses] and having a normal life," Thompson said. "We were talking about how when she goes home, she feels like they're going to be really sad and condescending towards her because she hasn't got a normal experience."





BATTLING COVID-19

WORDS S. HATHORN
DESIGN K. MATTOCKS
ILLUSTRATION N. MEINS

This article originally appeared
in the *Los Angeles Loyolan* and
has been edited for length.

An LMU staff member's experience with COVID-19 serves as a stark reminder of the ravages of the disease—and how little we actually know about it more than a year into the pandemic.

When Chelsea Brown, the assistant director for student engagement at the Center for Service and Action, began this year, she didn't think she was going to spend the entire summer at home with her family, going viral on TikTok and listening to a surprise Taylor Swift album. Nor did she think a pandemic would spread across the globe, infecting her and her family.

Once COVID-19 hit the U.S. in full force and LMU closed campus to most for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, Brown went back home to quarantine in her parents' house in LaGrange, Ga. The Browns all tried to follow the rules to keep safe. With older parents and a sister with a congenital heart defect, they fell into the "at-risk" category.

Then, in early July, Brown and her sister met a small group of friends at the playground. They were the only four people there, according to Brown. Not long after, her sister and her mom began to cough. They later all tested positive for COVID-19. "The range of symptoms were different for all of us. [My mom's] case was the

worst of all of ours," said Brown. "We all lost our sense of taste and smell. Everyone had a cough."

Brown said her main symptom was difficulty breathing. She recalls going on a walk before she tested positive and not being able to walk a block without feeling physically worn out. Her mother had to go on a breathing treatment, first using an inhaler and then a nebulizer, which allowed her to breathe in medicine easier.

"THE TERRIFYING THING FOR ALL OF US WAS WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN."

"The terrifying thing for all of us was we did not know what was going to happen," said Brown. "It just sucks all of the energy out of you. When you aren't eating, you're not drinking, you're not moving, your body just deteriorates. It was difficult. It was scary."

It took Brown and her family a month to test negative. But even after negative tests, Brown felt like her ordeal with the virus is far from over. She

*"IT DID
SOMETHING
TO MY BODY
THAT I DON'T
UNDERSTAND."*

still noticed getting short of breath and a reduced sense of smell. In an exam of her sister's pacemaker, the doctors found a blood clot on her heart. Research has shown that COVID-19 leads to an increased risk of blood clotting.

The lack of understanding of the virus's long-term effects worries Brown. "Sometimes I still get nervous, like I could still just die. That is the lingering fear for all of us," she said. "Obviously I'm glad I had somewhat of a mild case and that I'm better, but I don't feel like it's over. It did something to my body that I don't understand. It was terrifying."

Throughout the year, Brown watched as people around the country failed to take the pandemic seriously. Knowing the consequences all too well, this frustrates her. "It has become, I think in some minds, an inconvenience. I want to remind people it's more than an inconvenience. It is still life-threatening. Just because somebody didn't die, that is too low of a threshold," said Brown.

She continued, "If you know what spreads [COVID-19] and you're not actively combating against that, then you should be surprised that you don't get it, not that you get it." Brown also noted that many may not know about their own pre-existing conditions that could worsen the effects of the virus, making the assumption that you are a healthy adult a "gamble."

Brown's hometown of LaGrange proved to be an example of a general lack of understanding about the virus. She recalls a divide in LaGrange between people who wore masks and those who did not. LaGrange,

a relatively small and rural town that is largely Republican, was ranked in June 2020 as a place with one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in the country.

Brown thinks this is due to a lack of clear and factual information about the virus from the government since the start of the outbreak in the U.S. "The lack of clarity was really frustrating," she said.

Despite almost a year of LMU going remote—filled with Zoom calls and closets-turned-offices—Brown says she is grateful the University did not choose to return to normal operations this year for the safety of students and staff. She particularly worries about groups that may be less considered, such as the Facilities Management staff. "People are like, 'students will be fine.' But the people who clean their bathrooms go home to their families, who maybe have multigenerational people there. Why are we OK endangering [them just] for our sense of normalcy?" said Brown.

Even after her harrowing year, Brown remains lighthearted about her situation and said it brought her family closer together. She also expressed gratitude for LMU students she knows who have taken the pandemic seriously. In the end, she said she has faith in college students to make the right decisions. "I have appreciated how the students I've been in contact with have handled it," she said. "I'm grateful for that."



VACCINATION

Shots of Hope

WORDS A. KEK
DESIGN K. MATTOCKS
PHOTOS LMU MARCOMM



Top, Dr. Dan Hyslop, medical director of Student Health Services, receives a COVID-19 vaccination. Bottom, Hyslop administers a dose of the Moderna vaccine. An on-campus vaccination center officially opened in Burns Recreation Center almost exactly 12 months after LMU's campus went to limited-operations status due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the vaccine came to campus in March, many in the LMU community received the two shots necessary to get us all one step closer to normalcy.

IN ITS FIRST TWO WEEKS OF OPERATION, the LMU vaccination center administered about 500 first doses of the Moderna vaccine, which requires two shots at least 28 days apart for maximum efficacy. “The beautiful thing is how efficient we have been,” said Dr. Dan Hyslop, Medical Director of Student Health Services. “We have not wasted even one dose.”

A tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work needed to happen to make the clinic a reality. “Planning for these things is its own discipline,” Hyslop said. “We needed people to stand at the 36,000-foot level and be able to put everything in place. Marketing and Communications, Public Safety, legal, Student Affairs, IT, people negotiating contracts, and those who organize conferences setting up the gym and so on,” said Dr. Hyslop, “I understand none of this; I gave up thinking that I was in charge a long time ago.”

The vaccination clinic's opening marked more than a year of long days and nights of uncertainty for the Student Health Services staff — and the University as a whole. Hyslop reflects back on the response to the virus' arrival in the U.S. in early 2020 and remembers thinking, “Am I overstating this? Am I being crazy for saying all this stuff?”

“The biggest challenge was the unknown,” said Katie Arce, Director of Student Health Services. “Our response early on was to close our doors to in-person appointments [on campus] because nobody understood this virus. We had to care for students with COVID-19 symptoms over the phone. So many questions and no good answers.”

ON

Now that many students, faculty and staff are vaccinated, there is a new sense of hope around campus. “Know that the vaccines are safe and effective, with few side effects. COVID-19 will be here forever, but our immune systems will get more effective at fighting it,” said Arce.

However, that does not mean everything will go back to how it was before.

“It is not up for the virus to change, it is up to us to change how we deal with the virus,” Hyslop said. “I hope that we start to wear masks regularly, a normal practice in Asian nations, which undoubtedly helped them curb the spread of COVID-19.

“American exceptionalism has not been good for us — we can learn from other countries. Everybody has a role to play to keep wearing masks and social distance. The future is being written every day in terms of science and what is in the media. My guess is that this won’t be our last COVID-19 vaccine — there will be mutations.”

Summarizing his lengthy year on LMU’s medical frontlines, Hyslop concluded: “The United States’ response to the pandemic has been a pendulum, and right now we are in a better part of the swing.”

STUDENTS DO THEIR PART TO STOP THE SPREAD

LMU STUDENTS JOINED THE BATTLE AGAINST COVID-19 IN MYRIAD WAYS, INCLUDING CONTACT TRACING AND RESEARCHING THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON YOUTH.



UNESCO'S YOUTH AS RESEARCHERS 2020

Lianlen Joy Go Distor
Biochemistry

“One day, I hope that there will come a time wherein many of the hard-to-cure diseases already have a cure and a preventive measure for them. The cure-and-prevention mechanism would help lengthen the time you can be with your loved ones, one of my ultimate goals.”

LA. COUNTY CONTACT TRACING INTERNS

Camya Brazil
Biochemistry



“This contact tracing position has taught me that there is always a way to help. I wasn’t sure I was going to find a meaningful way to help throughout the pandemic besides being a first responder. This experience has shown me that there are many different ways and avenues to help.”

Nicole Ann Villa
Biology



“The position requires me to work toward gaining the trust of each individual, to keep them calm as they hear their test results as well as provide the appropriate resources needed to deal with issues they are facing. Through these interactions, I was surprised by the magnitude of impact that my position played in making the patients feel supported and comfortable during these challenging times.”

what do you most look forward to post-pandemic?



"I look forward to going out to eat with my API culture clubs! *It's always a good time full of laughs, friends and delicious food.* Coming into LMU, food outings were definitely a great way to meet new people and make good friends, so I can't wait to do that again."

ZOE CANNON
RECORDING ARTS

"The Software! I think LMU is going to make some innovative software purchasing decisions based on how much we have migrated to new systems during this time. No longer will universities be laggards in software purchasing decisions! We are opening a whole new can of worms! *Imagine how interconnected campus could be with new innovation systems!* It is very exciting stuff, both for universities and students."

RYAN L. WALKER
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



"GOING TO BARS AND CLUBS."

MILLIE WARWICK
PSYCHOLOGY



"MICROPHONE FOR ZOOM."

Nico Marino
Applied Mathematics

"INFLATABLE RAFT/BOAT."

Larissa McCord
Liberal Studies

"SQUATTY POTTY."

Alexander Liu
Entrepreneurship



"Taking the longest road trip across Canada and the U.S. without being asked, 'have you been out of the country in the last 14 days?' everywhere I check in!"

WENDY XU
FILM AND TV PRODUCTION

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST RANDOM QUARANTINE PURCHASE?



"MEETING NEW PEOPLE!"

JULIANA VENEGAS
BIOLOGY

"I can't wait to be on campus with my peers and meet my friends (and Buster [the LMU therapy dog]) for the first time as well! I am also looking forward to the Bluff views while studying in the library, and exploring L.A.!"

TROY WOMACK-HENDERSON
COMPUTER SCIENCE

"I can't wait to live on campus with my roomie, Sasha, and finally experience hands-on learning. I'm so excited to meet everyone and live the college life!"

CHELSEA VOS
THEATRE ARTS

*"BEING BACK ON
CAMPUS AND CONNECTING
WITH PEOPLE."*

JENNY WHITE
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

