

“How the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted my college and career aspirations.”

The Coronavirus Pandemic has been life changing. The beginning was a truly personal experience for me because the world literally shut down on my 16th birthday on March 14, 2020. The countless people lost has been the biggest tragedy of the situation. Although this time in history has been bad, it hasn't impacted my college and career aspirations. In fact, the changes I've made during the pandemic has allowed me to be more focused on college and beyond.

I decided to change my diploma path after my junior year. Since the 9th Grade, I had been enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Tucker High School. I really enjoyed the program and was on track to graduate with an IB diploma. However, at the end of 11th Grade, I determined that it wasn't best for me to continue in the program. I wanted the opportunity to get a head start on college and save money by earning college credits now. I began the Dual Enrollment Program at Georgia State University, and the pandemic was one of the reasons for that decision.

School shut down Thursday, March 13, 2020. The next few months were terrible. The school district decided to go all virtual for the remainder of the school year which really shocked everyone. By the end of my sophomore year, I was burned out. To make matters worse, virtual classes returned junior year, but this time the whole year was online. Although still enrolled in the IB program, the transition to online school was a difficult adjustment for me personally. I was really unmotivated. However, I can say online school taught me to persevere through hard situations. I cared too much about my grades. I never wanted to fall behind, so I kept working. I am proud to say that despite the fact that I learn best face to face (especially in a challenging program like IB) my grades never dropped. I was able to maintain a strong GPA and finish out the program strong.

It was extremely hard to leave IB during the uncertain times of the pandemic. Leaving meant having no classes with my closest friends who were all still in the program. However, in thinking about my future, I had to walk my own path. The dual enrollment program has taught me how to balance the demands of college professors, my high school courses, work, and extracurricular activities. Most importantly, it has given me a jumpstart on college credits and in pursuing a degree in computer science for my career goals.

The pandemic has created a renewed focus for me. Going forward, I know I want to have my own tech company after I graduate. Eventually, I want to be in a position to give back to my community by creating opportunities for underserved youth. This is one way I can give back and support my community in the event of another tragedy.