

My name is Shawn McDaniel II. At the time of writing this, I'm 22 years old and about to begin my senior year at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma or USAO. I'm an English major with an emphasis in creative writing. I'm writing this because I wanted to share the effect that COVID-19 has had on my school life.

In March of 2020, I was in the last semester of my junior year. I was taking four in person classes: Advanced Fiction Writing, Intermediate Spanish II, Shakespeare, and Gothic Literature. Because of concerns over the virus, my classes were switched from in person, to online. This change was difficult due to the nature of my classes, most of which were discussion based. My Gothic Literature class was probably my favorite in the semester. Because of the openness of the classroom, my fellow students and I were able to have multiple conversations about the various novels we read. This free-flowing discussion format was impossible to recreate over Zoom, as the overlapping conversations would render it impossible for anyone to understand each other. Also, when it came time to write my final paper, I was frustrated by the lack of an educational environment and as a result, my work suffered. The only reason I passed the class was because of the work I had done pre-online.

As if the impact it had on my academic life wasn't stressful enough, I had planned a trip to England in the summer of 2020. It was a study abroad trip through the university that I had been looking forward to for a year. It was also going to be my first time taking a trip outside of the continental United States. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, my trip was postponed to the summer of 2021. While I am thankful my trip wasn't cancelled outright, it still affected me due to my need for a vacation after the stress of having my entire class schedule drastically changed midway through the semester.

This pandemic has negatively affected everyone I know. The stress of having to switch to online classes led to several students losing points in classes they otherwise would have passed. Thankfully, the university implemented a policy where students you were not happy with their final grades had the option to switch to a pass/fail grade system for the Spring 2020 semester.

Overall, while the pandemic hit my university hard, I am proud and impressed at the way the administration and the professors handled the switch. Maybe it is because that USAO is a smaller university and therefore don't have the same number of students as OU or OSU to work with, but USAO stepped up and helped their students to the best of their abilities. The professors understood the stress that the student body was going through and wen above and beyond to help us through the chaos the change in class type and for that I will always be thankful to my professors.