

Transcript of Interview with Flynn Connelly by Kaitlyn Davis

Interviewee: Flynn Connelly

Interviewer: Kaitlyn Davis

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Location (Interviewee): Las Vegas, NV

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Transcriber: Kaitlyn Davis

Abstract: Flynn Connelly is a 24 year old Electrical Engineer from Edinboro, PA. He currently lives in Las Vegas, NV where he is just starting a new career as a systems engineer for a government contracting company. Kaitlyn Davis interviews Flynn about what life was like being a student and new graduate during the Covid-19 global pandemic. Flynn speaks on what life was like during the initial transition to remote learning, explains what it was like to have graduation during the pandemic, and then tells listeners about his struggles with searching for a job. Kaitlyn asks about Flynn's struggles and wins, about his family and friends and how it affected them in relation to him, and over all how he handled each and every situation thrown at him by Covid-19.

Kaitlyn Davis 0:01

Hi, how are you?

Flynn Connelly 0:03

I'm good. How are you?

Kaitlyn Davis 0:05

I'm doing good. I'm doing good.

Flynn Connelly 0:07

That's good.

Kaitlyn Davis 0:09

Okay, so I just have a couple of questions here for you in a couple of different categories. So I figured we'd just kind of start with asking some general questions. Today's topic is kind of just going to be COVID, and college during COVID, and graduation, and having to go through all of these really big life changes in the middle of a global pandemic. So I figured could we just kind of start with college during COVID. So the first question I kind of had to ask for you was how was it to go from in person learning to all online classes, and which did you actually prefer in the end?

Flynn Connelly 0:52

So I actually did the whole transition period on my spring break. So I went home for spring break and then I got the order from my school to not come back to classes and how everything was gonna go what with Zoom, transferring from going to in class, in an actual building, meeting in person to go into lectures on my computer via Zoom. So that's basically what the transition was. And how did I feel about that? Well, I didn't really like it because there's a reason that I chose to go to this school, because it was in person, which is what I was used to growing up. I could have clearly

chosen online school, but I don't learn in an environment where I can't physically interact with my professors face to face, talk to them in that way and show equations on boards and stuff like that. So I didn't particularly like going to school online.

Kaitlyn Davis 2:18.

Okay. So the next question I would have for you is did you find- or how did you find the professors reacted? Were they more lenient, or did they keep on teaching as if nothing had changed during the pandemic.

Flynn Connelly 2:33

Well, the definitely understood that there was a major change that not only we were constantly changing because we were learning putting more information into our heads. But they also understood the big ole' the big change of how we were learning in the first place. And so as a result they were a little bit. I don't know if they were more lenient. When I think of that. I mean, if you don't have enough time to submit something do you get an extension? Well, I think that to be honest during online classes, we- we had more lenient professors because so much stuff was going on that was different that we were just thrown under the bus of COVID.

Kaitlyn Davis 3:32

Yeah that totally makes sense. Okay. Yeah. I think that in the middle of all of this we've all kind of had been- had to have been a little bit more lenient with everybody. So that makes sense. The next question I had for you was what did you miss most about in person learning while you were learning online remotely?

Flynn Connelly 3:50

This goes back to the first thing that you said actually. I really missed being able to go to office hours and actually meeting with my professors. Showing them my notes. And my notebook. I can't show my notebook virtually unless I show it up- pull it up to the webcam. And even then, that's not really that easy to do. I could just show a picture message, but really the in the bulk of things that is much easier to just go to the office. It's much easier to learn. There's less complications, you know?

Kaitlyn Davis 4:28

Yeah, totally. Okay so then the next question that I would have for you is what was the easiest and the hardest things to transition to going from in person classes to all online classes.

Flynn Connelly 4:50

I had a couple of study groups. Actually, I think I just had one study group for one of my lecture classes and then going from doing that going and studying with a person or a group to do and discuss homework and notes, and stuff, and actually socializing in between classes. That was a big change. And also lab courses; I'm an engineering student- was, since I graduated. But lab courses, they were terrible in a remote learning environment. Previously, you had a whole desk to lay your stuff out on. You had the right equipment. Like in electronics lab, we had four big boxes dedicated

to being sources or analyzers or oscilloscopes, whatever, and they have very good they were able to do everything we needed. But once- once we had to work in our room with a shipped box with all the sort of smaller equipment. We didn't have all the available- none of the- not all of the characteristics we desired and the actual systems that monitored and supplied the circuits that I made were as good as I would have hoped. So it presented even more challenges to the already challenging lab classes.

Kaitlyn Davis 6:43

And what was the easiest thing, do you think?

Flynn Connelly 6:46

The easiest thing? Well, certainly getting up in the morning and not having to get up x minutes earlier than your class starts. Typically, during COVID times, I would wake up 10-20 minutes before class and make breakfast and then while I'm eating breakfast, I would go to class. Another easy thing? Well, I didn't really have to plan ahead a whole lot because I was confined to my room in my apartment all day. So if it's like I have to be somewhere or in a meeting at three o'clock, head to my room at 2:55 and log on.

Kaitlyn Davis 7:41

Your commute is much shorter, which makes it a lot easier.

Flynn Connelly 7:44

Yes.

Kaitlyn Davis 7:45

And there's not as much getting ready to go out because you don't have to really get ready to see anybody as much.

Flynn Connelly 7:51

Yeah.

Kaitlyn Davis 7:52

Which is- I think it was nice for everybody for a short period of time. But that grew old very quickly.

Flynn Connelly 7:58

Yeah, I definitely missed socializing.

Kaitlyn Davis 8:02

Okay. So then I want to start talking a little bit more about your graduation and that aspect of it. So my next question for you is, what were your graduation plans before COVID had cancelled them?

Flynn Connelly 8:21

The only thing that I think that I had planned was to have my family come down and watch me-

What's it called when the graduation ceremony? Pretty much, commencement or something? They wanted to watch me get my degree and the robe and gown, whatever they call it

Kaitlyn Davis 8:46

Cap and gown.

Flynn Connelly 8:48

Yeah as you can tell, I didn't care much about that. So I didn't have any plans. I just kind of wanted to get my piece of paper and my handshake that costs \$100,000. And then I wanted to get a job. I didn't have a whole lot of plans, nothing really changed to be honest. But I can tell you that some of my other friends probably had plans changed. And my mom definitely had her plans change because I know she wanted me- she wanted to watch me walk. And I never got to.

Kaitlyn Davis 9:16

Yeah, that's- that's rough. Do you know if your school had any other big celebrations planned or anything? Or was it just commencement?

Flynn Connelly 9:23

Yeah, that's something I don't really pay attention to. Well, they did actually have like a video for the electrical engineering department for all those people that were graduating. All the professor's had, like, however many seconds or minutes said thank you in their own little message to the outgoing, newly graduated engineers.

Kaitlyn Davis 9:53

So that actually leads me into my next question which was how did your school change and adapt graduation plans for your class and did you like or dislike these graduation celebration plans? So I know you explained kind of like what your major department did but what about the overarching university?

Flynn Connelly 10:18

You know I'm not sure. I can imagine they might have taken a similar approach, though for the larger departments like psychology and nursing and, you know, I don't- I don't know what they did.

Kaitlyn Davis 10:34

Okay. So then my next question was how do you think that not having a quote unquote real graduation affected you? And then a follow up question would be how did it affect your family and friends in any way as like an aftershock effect?

Flynn Connelly 10:51

Really, I think that the graduation ceremony is more about glory. It's kind of like the wedding day. But like, you know, less enthusiasm or less glory. I don't know how to- how to put that. I hope that message is conveyed all right.

Kaitlyn Davis 11:07

Like it's almost like it's less grandiose...

Flynn Connelly 11:09

It's less grandiose, that's a good way to put it. However, you know not having a graduation...
Remind me the question?

Kaitlyn Davis 11:21

The question was how did not having a quote unquote real graduation affect to you?

Flynn Connelly 11:27

Oh, well, me personally, it didn't affect me at all. I don't care if we're going to graduation.

Kaitlyn Davis 11:32

And the follow up was how did it affect your family and your friends as an aftershock?

Flynn Connelly 11:37

Oh, well, I know my parents are disappointed, but they also wanted me to live. So they were understanding about the whole not going to graduation because it doesn't exist this year sort of thing. They definitely understood the situation. I think they're a little bit disappointed in not being able to see me walk. My friends, you know, quite a few of them in my department and that the same school had the same situation. And I can only- I can- I can expect that they probably had family- they probably were in the same situation as me.

Kaitlyn Davis 12:21

Yeah, that makes sense. Do you think that as a result of the lack of formal and traditional graduation ceremony ceremonies, not only for college students, but also high school students and probably postgraduate students as well? Do you think that your class and others like you are actually more celebrated because I know a lot of kids. Like, personally, my sister. My parents went out of their way a little bit more and tried to celebrate her a little bit more and did a lot more and put a larger amount of effort into celebrating her graduation and making sure that she felt special because she didn't get that in a more like the traditional way. So did you feel that you feel similarly?

Flynn Connelly 13:18

You know I guess it's all up to the person. I don't know. I haven't ever thought about that part. Um, you have to give me a sec. I got to think about that one. Well, considering the pandemic pushed people into social media, a little bit more, I think than previously. Some of the celebration existed on social media platforms like Facebook.

Kaitlyn Davis 14:07

That's a good. That's a good little tidbit that you brought up there that we've kind of been forced into social media more, do you think that you use social media more?

Flynn Connelly 14:15

No. I use it a lot anyways.

Kaitlyn Davis 14:20

Okay, so moving on. The next couple questions I have for you are all about post-graduation, during COVID. So how did COVID affect your personal post-graduation plans?

Flynn Connelly 14:36

Well, the only plans that I had was looking for a job. And it did significantly impact my ability to find a job more easily not only because the interaction between anybody that offered me an interview or a phone call was different because I inherently behave differently over the phone compared to in person. Obviously in person, I have a little bit more personality. But the fact that COVID-19 shut so much down, there were very little jobs. I wouldn't say that actually. There weren't as many people hiring for new jobs. Like one company I applied for over and over again. And then after a month of finding different positions they... they- well, they reject- I don't know if they rejected me, but they called me back. And eventually after I had actually accepted another position, they were super got kind of gung ho about me attending their own job fair. Raytheon. But before that, I noticed that they had actually, in the news, they- they had an article, not them, but somebody wrote about them that- they- they laid off half their workforce or something along those lines, which is kind of understandable considering- well, it's not understandable. It explains the fact they didn't get back to me.

Kaitlyn Davis 16:20

Yeah, that makes that makes sense. So did you think that COVID kind of prolonged your quote unquote, post-graduation like yeah, I would say in between period, looking for a job kind of that?

Flynn Connelly 16:35

You know, it's hard to say. Because I kind of have to compare myself to my friends. I'm an engineering student. Oftentimes, people say "Oh, you'll have no problem finding a job. There's so many engineering jobs available, especially electrical engineering jobs." And quite a few of my friends were having the same difficulties as me and a couple of my other friends who weren't necessarily in engineering but they were still in- they still had majors from college that they graduated with, that were required in the daily workforce. And they took up to six months to get a job. But me out of school, despite the fact that I was looking back in April, and I graduated in August, I got a job offer in October after interviewing over the course of a couple of weeks with the company.

Kaitlyn Davis 17:39

Well, I'm glad that you got a job. That's good to hear. Congratulations. So the next question I think I would have for you is I think you've kind of already answered it. But just kind of move along. Do you think COVID made it harder for your job search to be successful? And I think another kind of a follow up question for that would be what do you think was the biggest issue you had when you were going through your job search? And do you think it was because of COVID or not?

Flynn Connelly 18:12

I'll answer that right now. The biggest issue was the lack of jobs, at least in my area that I wanted to do. As an electrical engineering student, the perk of being an electrical engineering graduate, BSEE [Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering] that is- is I can go to- I can find a job as an electrical engineer. It's not like I'm going to school for biology and I have to search for like lab technician and stuff. But the fact is there was so many electrical engineering positions out there, but nothing for me in Pittsburgh.

Kaitlyn Davis 18:50

And that makes sense. So then can you explain how you felt during your job search and how it felt when it was so prolonged?

Flynn Connelly 19:04

There were many times I didn't think that I would find a job for years. It was- it made me anxious. Sometimes it made me a little bit depressed. But you know, I kept on having those people telling me you know, "With that- with that kind of major, you can find anything." So it kind of picked me- picked me up, but yeah, definitely kind of ruined by ambition some- some of the time.

Kaitlyn Davis 19:40

That's completely understandable. And then looking back before the pandemic. How can you compare that to how you felt before the job market kind of took that hit?

Flynn Connelly 19:56

I wasn't really looking for jobs, back then. What do you mean?

Kaitlyn Davis 20:01

Did you did you feel confident in how the job market looked and like your ability to find one quickly? Did you think that it was going to be a short job search before? Like what- what were your feelings before?

Flynn Connelly 20:15

Well, I do remember back then that our generation was posed to be going into the best job market in years. And then this happens. So I was very confident before I had to learn virtually. I learned that the stock market had crashed and thousands of people, including some of my friends, were becoming jobless. Despite the fact that all that I was still, you know, I was- I was naive. I was straight out of school. I had no idea how the real world worked. So I was still confident. Maybe I shouldn't have been. But I was very adamant about finding a job. So that's really all I did for a while. Maybe that's what led to my success. Maybe it was my GPA.

Kaitlyn Davis 21:08

So then speaking about success how did it finally feel to when you finally got a job?

Flynn Connelly 21:24

You know, it was kind of relieving. But it was far away to home. So it was. It was sad to tell all my friends and family that I won't be around for much longer. Not that I'm going to die. That I'm going to leave the area. That's it. I mean so that's not really related to COVID, you know? But you know, it was nonetheless, it was a big change. And it was gonna affect everybody around me despite all the changes that we're going around anyways. Am I getting off topic?

Kaitlyn Davis 22:10

A little bit but it's okay. So then I think my final question that I have for you is actually kind of a big one. So here we go. Do you think COVID helped you in any way? So what I'm basically trying to ask is- is there anything that has happened during this global pandemic that has taught you anything that will- you think will help you in the future? Like, what have you learned? Or I guess what I'm trying to ask is, what can you take away from this? Or what do you think- how will this help you grow?

Flynn Connelly 22:48

Oh, you're gonna have to let me think about that one for a second. How has COVID-19 helped me grow? It's- it's shown me how polarized, at the very least the American society is. How many people have completely opposite, or convoluted views about how politics works. With some people saying the mask works, some people not wearing the mask because they say it doesn't work. So it's helped me understand society a little bit better. It's not really related to college. But that's helped, you know, understand that a little bit.

Kaitlyn Davis 23:52

That's- that's good.

Flynn Connelly 23:54

How else has it helped me? It's helped me realize how good I have it. Because a lot of people went without jobs. For a while they had to rely on the stimulus check. I did not. I didn't have an option for it. Maybe I did. I didn't- I don't know. I was a student focused on school. But I still didn't have to worry about that. So I didn't have to look into it that much because my- my parents helped me out with school, money at least. I had a place to live. I had food. It helped me realize how much I have, how grateful I am.

Kaitlyn Davis 24:55

I think those are really good- good lessons to have taken away from this.

Flynn Connelly 25:02

It's helped me get along with people better and how to- how to approach situations where I have issues with people too. Because I was in the same place with the same people for quite a long time.

Kaitlyn Davis 25:21

Quarantine whipped us all into shape, I'd say.

Flynn Connelly 25:24

Yeah made us all hate each other.

Kaitlyn Davis 25:28

A little bit of both. I think...

Flynn Connelly 25:30

Perhaps...

Kaitlyn Davis 25:32

Well, I just wanted to say thank you for letting me interview today. Hope you have a good rest of your day.

Flynn Connelly 25:41

Thank you and you too.

Kaitlyn Davis 25:43

Bye.

