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The Grizzly, May 7, 2020

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THE GRIZZLY

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Photograph Courtesy of Kevin Leon

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Across the world people have been asked to social-distance and self-quarantine during the pandemic of COVID-19. In interviews about how Ursinus students are passing their time in self-quarantine, they griped about lack of motivation while feeling overwhelmed. But there were also observations about how students are relaxing, connecting with their loved ones in different ways, and investing in old and new interests.

In their downtime students have been watching Netflix shows like *Sex Education*, *The Office*, *Bo Jack Horseman*, and *Tiger King*. And of course, with that comes re-watching favorite shows from *The Witcher* to *Rick and Morty*. Some have become enveloped in cooking. "I've been relaxing by watching Bon Appetit's YouTube channel," sophomore Sarah Thompson said. "There's just something about watching people make food that is super calming to me." Another student said, "I also smoke a lot of weed, and I tend to cook or bake before or while I smoke."

Many students incorporate exercise into their lives through daily workouts or simply taking walks through nature. According to Morgan Laster, "During self-quarantine, my goal has been to reconnect with nature and to also work on exercising more. Every day, weather permitting, I walk around my neighborhood and take time to appreciate how pretty all of the trees and flowers are. I have to power through my allergies, but it is worth it to feel the sun and the breeze, things I have come to really appreciate since I am now at home." Another student discussed how staying active helps clear her head. She explains, "Because of the pandemic, I have been able to hike much more and to explore new trails in my area. On this hike, I saw four deer, a pileated woodpecker, and a timber rattlesnake, but I got insanely lost. So lost that I ended up wandering onto a game preserve

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... A hunter found me while he was driving his cart/fourwheeler, and I ended up hitchhiking with this dude with a shotgun as he drove me to a path that could lead me out of the woods.”

Old interests and new skills have kept students busy. Sophomore Julia Eckels said, “I’ve picked up embroidery and sewing because my aunt is a nurse, so I’ve been keeping myself busy sewing her and the rest of my family face masks. I’ve also began making jewelry and other crafty things.” Senior Marisa Spiegel has been “playing with my Perler Beads and building stuff for myself and friends.”

Some relationships have persist through alternative means, and others have been strengthened by quarantine-enforced close quarters. From Zoom, Facetime, Microsoft Teams, Netflix Party, to texting, students have stayed in contact with friends, significant others, and extended family. Sarah Thompson talked about how she’s been spending time with her family. “My mom and I just finished doing a 1,000-piece puzzle together. It was a good way to take our minds off things. My mom and I also try to go on walks together, or take a ride just to get out of the house. My family and I also organized a ‘parade’ a couple of weeks ago as a surprise for my grandmom since we all can’t be together.” Sophomore Andrew Moore explained, “With my family we watch shows together, or cook together, but beyond that we do our own things.”

Our relationships with our family and loved ones has also been a source of inspiration for students during these difficult times. Julia Eckels said, “My family is really what keeps me going. My family is my heart and soul and they are my motivation. I’m very family-oriented and I love being with them. My best friend has also been very encouraging during this time, and he makes everything easier.” Junior Elizabeth Burke echoed this sentiment. “My friends and professors have kept me motivated. Each time I talk with any of them, I feel rejuvenated and hopeful.”

This is all to say that yes, without a doubt these are difficult times, but the company of loved ones, support of those we can’t physically be with, an interest and appreciation for the things that we have in our present moment, and the thought that we will get through this together are giving us the inspiration and strength to keep going.



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The Canvas Commencement? April 2, 2020 Kevin Leon News 0 Photograph Courtesy of Kevin Leon Kim Corona kicorona@ursinus.edu With the remainder of spring semester moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ursinus College is scrambling to figure out what to do

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The sun goes up and down every day. This routine strings itself into weeks, which have now blurred into months. The last day of in-person classes was on March 6. The online-classroom that supplanted traditional college learning gave people more free time. No longer worried about having to show up to classes or club meetings, it became the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the new-found liberty, at least on paper. But it's become obvious that the underlying issue at hand, the whole covid-19 pandemic, isn't really the best backdrop for working or learning.

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A lot of people have stuff that they want to learn or work on, but lack the time during normal, day-to-day life. Jobs or school take precedent over any creative outlets. And with all the new time that comes with unemployment and online-school, people should have the time to work on that stuff, right? I should be able to work on any art projects now, since I have the time. We should all be more productive with this time. Learn a new skill. Get into gardening. All that. But, I don't believe that's the right way to look at any of this.

When we think that, if only we had more time we'd work on these side projects, it assumes that everything is normal. A pandemic is anything but. Processing the changes that have and are occurring has a mental and emotional cost.

Our understanding of the world is shifting and giving in to the pressure of what? Not having to work? Of being shown that everything society has told us is required, like commuting to work every day, isn't actually necessary? And while I'm glad that this is exposing how broken our national routine was, it still damages the psyche of everyone who is bearing the brunt of this, everyone who isn't rich.

Wealthy people can stay in their big houses, not worried about paying rent or having the lights cut out or risking their health to grocery shop. Everyone else is thinking of these issues while worrying about what their problems will be in a week or two. And to expect people to be productive while mulling these risks shows a lack of empathy.

People shouldn't feel like they're failing to take advantage of this time by not picking up hobbies or new languages. It's beyond that. When employers lack lenience, that's a symptom of our productive meritocracy illusion. When universities don't listen to students who want universal pass/fail, or even just universal pass, they too are continuing the fantasy of persevering through "hardship."

And even those workers labelled as "essential," who still have to show up to work, show why centering ourselves around productivity works against us. Videos of people in New York and Los Angeles clapping at the end of the day to extend gratitude for these workers is, on the surface, a good gesture. But when you start to consider how these people are required to work during a pandemic, risking their health and their families, clapping for them while in the safety of your home rings hollow.

I suppose the overarching point is that we are not living through a normal time, so expecting productivity to be equal to that of a pre-Covid world is silly. Empathy is more than just surface-level gestures. And you shouldn't

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The Canvas Commencement? April 2, 2020 Kevin Leon News 0 Photograph Courtesy of Kevin Leon Kim Corona kicorona@ursinus.edu With the remainder of spring semester moved

beat yourself up for not maximizing your time. Society's shifting, and hopefully this helps to change things in the future when the pandemic ends.



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