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Period of Waiting Before Days of Glory

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By Bianca Sa

Out of all the exciting moments in college, no event is more memorable than graduation day. After several months of studying and learning, students wait for the day they get to walk across the graduation stage, thank all those who journeyed with them through college, and dive into their next adventure.

Thousands of students across the country and all over the world awaited their graduation day in the year of 2020, but sadly weren't able to experience it due to the pandemic. "It was like the ending of a chapter that you never got to close off," says Matt Taylor, an Accounting graduate.

The unforeseen global pandemic caused students to change their original graduation plans. Instead of attending the in-person ceremony and hosting big gatherings for relatives and friends, students had to attend a virtual ceremony and host much smaller gatherings. Students faced a lot of uncertainty, which forced them to face the reality of going out into the real world "a little quicker than what [they] saw it coming to be," Taylor states. 2020 graduates certainly had much to learn during the pandemic, and many of their paths were changed because of the pandemic.

Dolores Boschert, Lindenwood graduate in Paramedicine, graduated in May 2020. Much of what she had planned to accomplish during her last semester as a college student had to be readjusted due to sudden changes and cancellations. Students strive to start a new job as soon as they get out of college. Boschert had an internship scheduled for Spring 2020 and was also preparing to get a paramedic state license test right before summer started, which would then allow her to start looking for jobs in the Emergency Medical Services field. Her biggest struggle was not being able to go to class in-person. The Paramedicine program involves a lot of lab work and hands-on experience, and “trying to adjust the last couple of weeks online” made it harder for her to “get the same test prep[aration]” that she would have received under normal circumstances. Taylor also sympathizes with Boschert’s feelings towards having to adapt with the new education format: “Senior-level classes are not fun to take online.”

Unfortunately, Boschert wasn’t able to do her internship and get her state license before graduation. Though she had to navigate lots of new challenges, Boschert was able to do her internship during summer and got her state license in Paramedics at the end of July, and she is very happy with how things turned out for her:

“Although my internship got put off and pushed back, which I was very sad about, I just tried to have the best attitude I could... I ended up having...the best internship I could have asked for. So even though [the internship]

happened late, I don't think it would have happened the way it did if it were earlier," Boschert says. Boschert's acknowledgment of the positive outcomes amidst unplanned circumstances is admirable.

Taylor's ability to adapt to change is very commendable. A man of great religious faith, Taylor reflects that the global pandemic was a reminder "that there are things that [he] can't control," and that "in the end [he has] to rely on God."

Before Covid-19, Taylor had started a tax accounting internship in January 2020, and although he was not able to finish it, he worked enough hours that counted as credits towards his major. Learning how to deal with sudden shock and sadness from not being able to reach his goals as planned was not easy for Taylor. It's impressive how he didn't let the situation keep him from achieving his goals.



Masahiro Ishizuka, a BA in Digital Cinema graduate, is another student who didn't let the pandemic keep him from following his dreams. Ishizuka is an international student from Japan, and when he graduated in Dec. 2020, he applied for the Optional Practical Training. OPT is a program that gives international students the opportunity to work temporarily in their major area of study. If approved, it usually takes 60 days for students to get their OPT visa back.

Under normal circumstances, Ishizuka would have received his OPT visa shortly after his graduation and would have been able to accept several job offerings in video production. Because of the pandemic, he had to face a waiting period, just like Boschert and Taylor experienced. Waiting two additional months to get his OPT visa back gave Ishizuka some time to think about his future, and he suddenly decided to move to Florida. "I decided to move because this was a good opportunity for me," he says. Unlike Missouri,

“there is a huge [movie] industry in Florida, [with filming companies everywhere.... It feels like a fresh start.”

Ishizuka’s life has drastically changed over the past few weeks. His dream job is to work in a major film studio in California or New York. He continues his remote job in Japan and has started to work as a freelancer for American companies. Ishizuka is working very hard in building his work history and reputation, and there is no doubt that he will continue to be successful wherever he goes.

Boschert’s determination and positive attitude outlook on her new reality has also been very rewarding. She has a full-time job at Christian EMS as a paramedic and has recently started fire academy program. Boschert has been wanting to be a fire-fighter and a paramedic since sixth grade, and she is incredibly happy in making her childhood dream come true.

Taylor is just as successful as Boschert and Ishizuka. Before his graduation in May 2020, Taylor put a lot of effort into finding a full-time job. Over the course of five months, he applied to over 120 job positions and had 30 interviews. The patience and resilience Taylor cultivated also paid off in the end -- he is now a full-time tax accountant at a firm called Burds & Kuntz PC and is currently studying for the Certified Public Accountant exam.

In the same way moving to the Southeast “feels like a fresh start” to Ishizuka, Boschert and Taylor have also started new chapters in their career paths. These students did not get to end their college careers without a graduation, but the period of waiting and uncertainty taught them the most valuable things they could ever learn – to embrace the unexpected and be open-minded to what life has to offer them next.