

SEPTEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 4

GO2GRAD

TO ENHANCE, TO EMPOWER, TO ENRICH

NEWSLETTER



STUDENTS OF LIFE

In their own words, students and recent grads describe their educational journeys

WHAT KIND OF STUDENT ARE YOU?

Take our quiz to find out!

TAKING THE LEAP

A mature student shares her experience starting college during COVID-19



contents



3
**PAVING THE WAY
THROUGH STUDENT
EXPERIENCE**

Our featured students share the lessons they've learned, their favourite student experiences, and more in this Q&A.

10
**WHAT TYPE OF
STUDENT ARE YOU?**

Are you an overachiever? The creative type? Take our quiz to find out and get tips on how you can bring your A-game this term.

15
**WORKING
TOGETHER... APART**

Go2Grad tutor Rozy Abo Mazid offers her insights on how you can manage virtual group work like a pro.

18
TAKING THE LEAP

Mature student Kristal Jones discusses why she decided to go back to college, starting school during COVID-19, and the value of education.

paving the way through student experience

with **bibi hakim**



What are you studying?

I am pursuing a Joint Honours in Public Administration and Political Science at the University of Ottawa

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

My Member of Parliament, the Hon. Kirsty Duncan, is one of many people I look up to. She's taught me that kindness always wins. If you believe in something, or dream of something that you want to do, it is possible! You just need the heart and courage to do so. I am so glad to have her as a mentor and to call her a friend. Every day I learn more and more. She's taught me why community engagement is important, as well as how to find my courage.

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

The most important skill for students to learn is stress management. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) projects that 33% of incoming university/college students will experience some form of mental health-related concern. The United Nations projects that 1 in 4 people will experience a form of mental illness in their lifetime. These numbers are high, and as we move forward to break the stigma we must teach students and young people how to manage stressful environments and how to maintain their mental wellness.

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

As a student pursuing academics currently, it's being in a space that allows you to learn and make mistakes. Being a student gives you a network and access to people and knowledge on endless subjects. In a sense, the world is your oyster to discover.

paving the way through student experience

with **christy lee**



What are you studying?

I'm currently finishing my last semester of undergrad at the University of Ottawa, studying **communications and business**.

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

There is **no one person** from whom I could say I've learned the most. I've learned a lot from many different people, from teachers and managers to family and friends. **Each of us has our own unique skills**, and I think that **there's something to be learned from every person**.

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

I think one of the most important skills for students to learn is **how to be adaptable**. In an ever-changing world, it's crucial for students to **be open to change**, **able to quickly learn new skills**, and **willing to seize opportunities**.

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

I think the most rewarding part of being a student is the **freedom to explore your interests and passions**. As a student, there are so many ways to learn about different career pathways and gain exposure to multiple industries, from joining student clubs to participating in a CO-OP program.

paving the way through student experience

with **laura ferguson**



What are you studying?

I am currently in my final semester at uOttawa studying [communications with a minor in political science](#).

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

I learned the most in my previous co-op work term from [my team members](#) at Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. My supervisor and my manager were great role models and they both provided me with [excellent examples of leadership and kindness](#) that I intend to incorporate in my future team collaborations.

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

I think that [organization and time management](#) are the most important skills to have in university. Balancing readings, lectures, and assignments, as well as having a social life and time to relax, are essential in order to get the most out of your time at university

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

The most rewarding part of being a student is [the opportunity to meet new people](#). University attracts a host of different individuals with their own diverse experiences. It allows for your world to expand and for you to make [important connections and relationships](#) which will last a lifetime.

paving the way through student experience

with **rudolph damas**



What did you study?

I studied political science and public administration at the University of Ottawa.

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

The person from whom I learned the most would be my mother. She has played the biggest role in the person I am today. A few of the things I learned from her are kindness, perseverance, patience, keeping an open mind, to always treat everyone I encounter with care and so much more.

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

I think the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university is discipline. Having discipline is a skill, and I'm not saying that I am always disciplined, but it is definitely something I learned to perfect along the way. This means learning to dedicate time for what you may not want to do in the present, but will make things easier for you in future.

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

The most rewarding part of being a student is discovering interests and skills you did not know you had through new experiences. This can be by taking an elective that's completely unrelated to your program or volunteering for an organization outside of your comfort zone. I especially found the experiences outside the classroom to be the most rewarding. I either learned I didn't like something, or I gained a new hobby and skill.

paving the way through student experience

with **dana-kaye matthews**



What are you studying?

I'm studying **political science and public administration** at the University of Ottawa.

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

When I was in my first year I met **my friend Danielle**, who is a few years older than me. I admire her so much! Outside of my family, she is one of the people who believes in me the most and **she always challenges me to think and act and question.**

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

Time management, time management, time management. The important parts of this being: **know your limits**, if you have trouble making time for yourself then **schedule time for yourself**, give yourself room to **be flexible**, and **plan ahead**. **My top tip: Split up your work in small chunks.** You start working earlier, but you're less overwhelmed with the amount of work.

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

University has been such an epicentre of opportunity! Jobs! Internships abroad! Research projects! Doing cool things like interviewing Members of Parliament, activists and academics! Being exposed to so many different people, with different experiences and world views! **Being a student is about learning to be more receptive to learning opportunities in every form they take.**

paving the way through student experience

with **alex sim**



What are you studying?

I started my studies in the Biochemistry program at the University of Ottawa, but switched to the History program after my first year. It was a big change but turned out to be the right choice! I had a much better time studying a topic I was actually interested in.

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

My dad! From helping me with student registration to searching for my first apartment, he has had my back the whole way through my journey as a student. He's a lifesaver and I don't think I'd be able to survive in the "real world" without him and what he taught me!

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

Being able to think and act independently is a HUGE asset for any young adult! You learn quickly that you can't rely on your classmates, professors, or TAs for a lot of things, so being able to research and problem-solve on your own will make your life a lot easier. There's always answers to your questions, you just have to know how to look for them!

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

By far, it's the variety of experiences and opportunities that are available to you as a student. My time on campus provided me with a lot of cool events, places, and people from which I've learned a lot of different things. Honestly, it has opened my mind up to all kinds of stuff that I never would have thought about or experienced otherwise!

paving the way through student experience

with **rachel rivet**



What did you study?

I started at uOttawa studying French Literature and Education and then I studied Legal and Executive Office Administration when I went to Algonquin College.

Tell me about the person from whom you've learned the most.

I learned the most from my mom. From a young age, she's always taught me to do what makes me happy and that I should always stand up for myself. With her being self-employed, I got to see first-hand what it's like working for yourself, which really inspired me and made me want to do that.

What do you think is the most important skill for students to learn before coming to university?

Two words: time management. I thought I knew how to properly manage my time, but when I went to university, I had to completely re-learn time management because I had so much more going on in my life to balance than I had before university.

In your opinion, what is the most rewarding part of being a student?

The most rewarding part of being a student is being passionate about what you're studying. When you're actually interested in what you're learning, it feels so much better and the work that comes with school doesn't necessarily feel like a chore.

WHAT TYPE OF STUDENT ARE YOU?



01

On a typical weekend, you:

- a) Hit the books to prepare for next week's test
- b) Hang out with friends
- c) Create something
- d) Sleep until you can't sleep anymore
- e) Have a million things to do

02

On a typical school night, you spend ___ hours on social media.

- a) 1-2
- b) 3-4
- c) 5-6
- d) It's pretty much continuous
- e) 0, I don't really use it

03

It's the night before an exam. What does your study routine look like?

- a) Flipping through your notes while talking with friends about weekend plans and scrolling through Instagram
- b) Re-writing everything on flash cards and quizzing yourself on key points
- c) Chugging caffeine and staring blankly at your textbook between other activities
- d) Wait, there's an exam tomorrow?! Panic, then call in sick the next day
- e) Colour code your notes and creating acronyms or jingles to help you remember tough concepts



04

Your favourite subject is:

- a) Math / Science
- b) English
- c) History
- d) Art / Drama / Music
- e) Is lunch a subject?

05

Your friends would describe you as:

- a) Messy
- b) Artsy
- c) Busy
- d) Smart
- e) Sassy



06

For you, school is:

- a) Where you spend most of your time, between class and extracurricular activities
- b) Somewhere to learn new things and expand your knowledge
- c) A necessary evil
- d) Where you get to see your friends and interact with your peers
- e) Usually boring, but you suppose learning is important

07

What's your dream job?

- a) Software engineer at Google
- b) Prime Minister
- c) Famous musician
- d) Professional snack sampler
- e) Social media influencer



ADD 'EM UP!

Question 1: a) = 3, b) = 2, c) = 4, d) = 5, e) = 1

Question 2: a) = 1, b) = 4, c) = 2, d) = 5, e) = 3

Question 3: a) = 2, b) = 3, c) = 1, d) = 5, e) = 4

Question 4: a) = 3, b) = 2, c) = 1, d) = 4, e) = 5

Question 5: a) = 5, b) = 4, c) = 1, d) = 3, e) = 2

Question 6: a) = 1, b) = 3, c) = 5, d) = 2, e) = 4

Question 7: a) = 3, b) = 1, c) = 4, d) = 5, e) = 2

THE OVER ACHIEVER

WHO YOU ARE

You're ambitious, motivated, and always on the go. School is one of a million other activities on your list, and you often find yourself staying up late to finish homework. Others don't know how you manage it all, but you seem to thrive on the stress... with only the occasional burnout, that is. You consider yourself to be an expert multitasker and your jam-packed schedule is a point of pride.

HOW TO IMPROVE

You've probably heard this one before, but life is a marathon, not a sprint. While being well-rounded is great, it's crucial to find a balance that allows you to maintain your momentum without burning out. Instead of trying to do everything, try picking a few things to prioritize (including school work) and focus on giving them your all. You may find that you're able to produce more quality results when you limit your scope. Also, make time to do things that help you relax... not only do you deserve it, but you'll feel more refreshed and able to take on your other tasks.



**7-11
PTS**



**12-16
PTS**

THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

WHO YOU ARE

You're a people person who always knows the latest trends and where to find the party. Communicating is a breeze for you and others are drawn to your outgoing personality. However, if your social calendar is much busier than your academic calendar, you might struggle to achieve your full potential at school.

HOW TO IMPROVE

We get it, partying with friends or scrolling through TikTok is always going to be more fun than homework. But if you want to meet your goals and enhance your learning, it's going to take a little work. The good news is that you can use skills that you already have to get there! If you struggle to focus on school work when studying by yourself, try setting up a study group with friends. You can make a playlist and even bring snacks – just make sure to set an agenda ahead of time so you can stay on topic. There are also lots of accounts on social media that offer great insights on complex concepts, often in a fun and engaging way. If you find content that clicks with how you learn, try sharing it with friends! Hint: [@ego2gradtutors](#) on Instagram is a great place to start. 😊

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

WHO YOU ARE

You're a smart cookie and you know it! Grades are important to you and you're willing to put in a lot of work to achieve the best results possible. You almost always have your work done on time and you're the go-to person when your peers have a question about an assignment or test. However, while you might excel in one subject area, you could also be struggling in others. You may also feel like you're missing out on other parts of the student experience that your peers are enjoying.

HOW TO IMPROVE

If you're already doing well in some subjects, the good news is that those strengths can be applied to lots of other areas in your life. Skills like goal setting, making a schedule, and creative problem solving will not only help you to succeed in school but are also useful for getting to know people and finding new interests. It may feel scary to branch out beyond what you already know and are comfortable with, but taking a break from your usual routine to try new things can give you a fresh perspective and actually boost your confidence in the long run.



**17-23
PTS**



THE ARTIST

WHO YOU ARE

Whether it's art, music, theatre, dance, writing, or whatever, you've got a gift! You see things differently than others and feel inspired to create things that help you share your unique vision with others. With so many ideas and projects, you might find school to be a little dull in comparison. You may already have a non-academic career planned out, but it never hurts to have a backup plan. Ultimately, no matter what you do, learning is never bad for your brain and you can often find inspiration in the places you least expect (even math class!).

HOW TO IMPROVE

You've already got a lot of the tools you need to succeed, you just need to learn how to use them! The next time you find yourself struggling with a difficult concept, try thinking about it as if it was related to something you're passionate about. Often, by using your strengths and interests to approach material that you find difficult, you can trick your brain into understanding it in new ways. You'll also find that there are a lot more connections between your right brain (which controls creativity) and your left brain (which controls logic) than you think, whether it's links between music and math or using dance to understand physics. Once you learn to apply your strengths to challenges, there's nothing you can't do!

**24-29
PTS**

THE STRUGGLING STUDENT

WHO YOU ARE

Chances are, if this is you, you already know that you're struggling. School isn't easy, and while some might think you're lazy or unmotivated, there are a lot of different factors in life that can make school much more difficult for certain students.

Ultimately, it's up to you to take charge of your education, but the good news is that you're not alone. There are plenty of other people who are or have been in similar situations, and there are lots of resources available to help you get on track.

HOW TO IMPROVE

The first step towards success is identifying the challenges you are facing and finding the right people to help (e.g. a supportive teacher, family member, counsellor, or tutor). Next, think about your strengths and interests. There are many different ways to learn, and if you start by connecting a subject with something you're already good at or interested in, it can help you to understand difficult concepts. (Hint: this is something that our tutors incorporate into their learning plans!). Start by setting small goals that will help you to build your confidence. You won't turn into a straight-A student overnight, but if you stick with it and invest in yourself, you'll start to notice more and more positive changes. You've got this!



**30-35
PTS**



**NO MATTER WHAT TYPE
OF STUDENT YOU ARE,
GO2GRAD TUTORS CAN
HELP YOU BRING YOUR
A-GAME AND ACHIEVE
YOUR GOALS.**

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Working Together... Apart

3 TIPS FOR VIRTUAL TEAMWORK

BY

Rozy Abo Mazid

You've probably heard this before, but teamwork is an essential skill in many areas of life. Whether you're in high school, postsecondary education, or the workplace, the ability to work well with others to accomplish tasks is crucial. However, there are also many challenges associated with working in groups. Communication, time management, and conflict resolution can be challenging at the best of times, never mind the added pressure of organizing things virtually.

However, given that the current circumstances require teamwork to be done online, it is important to learn how to adapt to these changes quickly. Keep the following tips in mind the next time you're assigned a group activity, project, or assignment.



#1. COMMUNICATION IS KEY

The most vital aspect of working as a team online is communication. Not being able to turn to your partner and ask them a question right on the spot can be annoying, but don't let the physical distance ruin your team spirit! We live in a golden age of technology where we can easily access numerous applications that allow us to send texts, make voice and video calls, and share live updates on our work progress with each other. Apps like Google Meetings, Google Drive, Slack, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and many more can help us communicate with team members without feeling like we're miles away. Some apps even track changes so you can see exactly who's done what. Overall, these apps are a great way to keep in touch with your teammates and schedule meetings that suit everyone's schedules.

#2. STICK TO A SCHEDULE

Speaking of schedules, finding a time to meet can be a major challenge for teams that are working together from a distance. In some cases, team members may even be in different time zones! If your classes are broadcasted live at a specific time, one strategy that could be effective is to schedule your team meetings directly after class ends. This way, everyone is still online at the same time, plus the concepts from your lesson will still be fresh in your minds. However, if students have the option of watching pre-recorded lessons instead of a live broadcast (sometimes called 'asynchronous learning'), scheduling meetings after class might not work well for everyone. In this case, it may be more useful for your team to schedule meetings on weekends, as there is usually a higher chance of all team members being available. Apps with polling features like Doodle, SurveyMonkey, and Arrangr can be helpful for determining meeting times that work well for everyone. Also, keeping a shared calendar through NeedToMeet, Calendly, or Google Calendar can help ensure that all team members remember to attend meetings. Finally, it is important to compromise with other team members, especially if you are working in different time zones. Being flexible with your teammates increases the likelihood that they'll return the favour!



#3. COMPASSION COUNTS

Lastly, try to keep in mind that everyone adjusts to change at their own pace. We're currently experiencing extremely difficult and unprecedented circumstances, and this can be more challenging for some people to deal with than others. If you find that a team member is struggling to attend meetings or complete their part, ask them if there's anything you or the group can do to make them feel more comfortable. People may be uncomfortable asking for help on their own, so this is a great way to show your compassion and give your teammate (and your team overall) the opportunity to succeed. If you are having difficulty adjusting to the current circumstances, don't be afraid to reach out to your group members and/or your teacher for support. It's important to keep in mind that you are not going through this transition alone; everyone is adapting to the present situation in their own way. Approaching yourself and your group members with compassion will increase the chances of you working together effectively and succeeding at your task.



TAKING THE LEAP: STARTING COLLEGE AS A MATURE STUDENT

BY KAY ASPINALL

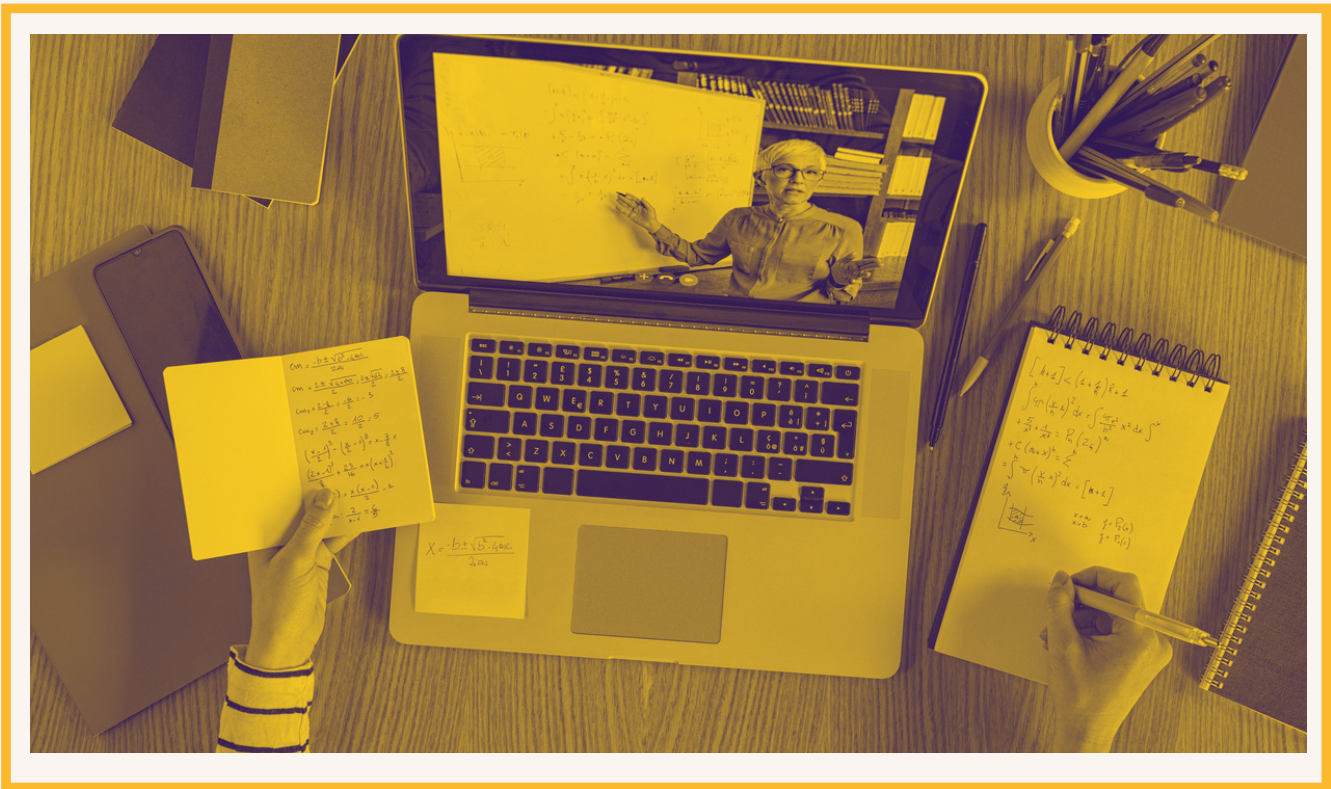
When most people think of a college or university student, they usually picture someone in their late teens or early twenties. Data confirms this perception: recent findings from Statistics Canada show that the **median age of students enrolled in a postsecondary program (college or university) is 24**. However, there is also a growing trend of adults attending or returning to postsecondary education. Of the approximately 1.4 million students who attended university in 2019, **roughly 75,000 were mature students with an average age of 35-45**. A similar phenomenon has been observed in colleges.

This month, I had the pleasure of interviewing an artist and entrepreneur from my hometown to talk about her experience as a mature student starting college this fall. **Kristal Jones**, age 33, is a **poet, photographer, and self-described bonus mom** (step-parent). As a queer person, she strongly believes in advocacy, anti-oppression, and equality for all people. She has previously worked as a Personal Support Worker (PSW), but suffered an injury at work that required her to make a career change, which is why **she decided to enrol in Fleming College's Social Service Worker (SSW) program**. It was a great privilege to sit down with Kristal at the end of a long day of school to talk about her academic and professional journey, as well as her current experience being a mature student.



“

Getting qualified as a SSW lets me use skills that I already have and stay in the sphere of 'helping professions'; it will also help me be able to offer something [to others] that I wish had been available to me in the community.



Given that Kristal just started her own photography business last year, which is very different from the SSW program she's currently enrolled in, I was curious **why she decided to pursue a college diploma now and what she hoped to learn from this experience?**

"My end goal with my SSW program is to have the tools and the skills to access the resources I need to start a 'photography as art therapy' program in the [Peterborough, ON] community. I went through a really difficult experience about a year ago that was followed by some trauma... I was diagnosed with acute stress disorder and subsequently lost my career as a PSW. Around the same time, I picked up a camera as a tool to work through some of the things I was going through and it kind of took off. Being able to use a camera gave me control and forced me to focus on the light (literally!) and see the beauty in the world... it's probably the most effective tool for my mental health that I've ever had at my disposal. Getting qualified as a SSW lets me use skills that I already have and stay in the sphere of 'helping professions'; it will also help me be able to offer something [to others] that I wish had been available to me in the community."

Given her busy professional life, I figured that it had been a while since Kristal was last in school. I asked **what her previous educational experiences had been like, and how they were different from school today?**

"I went to school to be a PSW at age 28, so around 5 years ago. It was a very different structure than the program I'm in now... the college was very small and had a low budget. I would be in one class all day with one teacher, so it really wasn't an adequate preparation for Fleming and what I'm doing now. In terms of high school... well, I was a bit of a nightmare as a teenager. - (laughs) - I'm a high school dropout; I went to 6 high schools and left when I was 15 or 16. In a lot of ways, this is my first time going to school in a really structured setting. Also, using digital tools wasn't a part of any of my school experiences, which is a big difference. We had a class called Computers when I was younger, but there were no computers in the classroom. I mainly use my computer for photo editing, Facebook, and email, so using it in a school setting has been a big adjustment."



Being a student means I'm investing in myself; I'm making a conscious investment in my future.

After learning about Kristal's difficult experiences with high school and her first college program, it was clear that deciding to go back to college and pursue another diploma hadn't been an easy decision for her, especially given the differences in technology and structure to which she has had to adjust. **I asked if she felt like she had reached a turning point that was sending her in a different direction. I was also interested to know if she had learned any lessons from the important choices she has had to make.** Kristal responded:

"Turning point... yeah, I mean, like a global pandemic? - (laughs) - COVID-19 changed everything. I had opened a studio space earlier this year, then lost all my contracts and my entire business in a week, so I had to close it. I had to think really fast about what I wanted to do... I wanted to balance feeling good about myself and having a sense of purpose with something I can use my PSW skills towards. I was also thinking about 'what can I do in 2 years?', because I'm already 33 and need to get the ball rolling.

That being said, I've learned through all of this that I have a lot more privilege than I had considered before. There are a lot of options and opportunities available to me, and having those options made it difficult to make a choice what to do next. Looking around, not everyone has those options, which made me really consider some of the disparities in my community.

I took it really personally at first, though. I mean, I had put a lot into my business and suddenly that was completely gone. But I look at what some people have gone through, and if the worst thing that has happened to me is losing my business, I'm still pretty lucky, right? And now I get to go to school!"

I was very impressed by Kristal's tenacity and ability to focus on her strengths to find a new path. She quickly let me know that there are definitely days when she struggles to see things in such a positive light, but that she has been trying her best to keep an optimistic perspective. I agreed that a positive outlook is an important, albeit sometimes challenging, thing to have for anyone starting school, especially during a global pandemic. Although Kristal had only been in school for a little less than a week, **she shared her first impressions with me:**

I've had a bit of a late start... I think the switch to online learning was a bit of a growth period for Fleming. I actually didn't get my outlines and timetable, or know who my teachers were, until about a week after classes started, so I've had to catch up, which has been hard. I think I've watched like 9 or 10 hours of lectures and seminars, plus doing all the exercises and quizzes associated with all of them!

I've had really kind, empathetic professors and faculty so far, though. They've been checking in a lot, which is good. And the courses are interesting! I guess overall it feels kind of like I decided I was going to run a marathon and I thought I would have time to train, but that didn't happen, so I'm just doing the best I can." - (laughs) -



Although she got off to a somewhat difficult start, I was glad to hear that Kristal was working to get back on track. Given how much she has on her plate as an entrepreneur, a mature student, and a parent, **I asked Kristal if she has faced any unique challenges in her educational journey?**

"In terms of parenting, I'm really lucky to be in an incredible situation where I'm one of four [parents] and we're collectively raising one child, so that balance is pretty easy. He just went back to school at the same time as me, so that's kind of fun! It's been challenging keeping up with my photography business, though. I recently made a post on my business Instagram saying that I was consciously making the choice to slow down for a while. I was hoping to do both work and school in tandem, but I've realized that it's going to need to be one or the other in terms of focus and the quality of my work. Overall though, the rest of the world feels kind of paused with COVID right now. I don't really have a social life, and we're social distancing from family, so the work-life balance is coming pretty easily to me, for which I'm really grateful."

Many students have found returning to school this month during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to be a significant challenge. When I asked Kristal **how COVID-19 has impacted her learning**, she had this to say:

"Honestly, it's a nice distraction [being in school]... It feels good to do something that is a little bit hopeful and to plan for the future since everything has felt so up in the air. You caught me on the right day though - (laughs) - I'm really trying to focus on the positive. It does feel very impersonal not to be learning with others, but it also helps a little bit. I have a lot of school trauma... I was always the new kid and was significantly bullied, so virtual learning is nice because it kind of levels the playing field a little bit so I can just learn."

Given that many students, myself included, have been very vocal about the shortcomings of virtual learning, I found Kristal's perspective to be very refreshing. Although learning online can certainly magnify some inequalities among students, I hadn't previously considered how it might also provide a more equitable learning environment for students who faced bullying or social stigma when attending school in person. Kristal's educational experiences, although clearly very difficult at times, gave her a unique outlook, and her observations forced me to think about my own school experiences a little bit differently. With this in mind, I asked her **what she thinks it means to be a student**. After a short pause, she replied:

"Well, it means that I am holding myself accountable to learning something... because I am paying a lot of money for it. - (laughs) - Being a student also means I'm investing in myself; I'm making a conscious investment in my future."

“

Your education doesn't have an expiry date. [...] There are all kind of people at all different stages in college, and you never lose the ability to learn.

I agreed that education is an important investment, even if it can be an expensive one! We also talked about how education can take many forms, both within and outside of the classroom. Based on Kristal's rich and varied life experiences thus far, I wanted to know **what were some of the most important lessons she had learned.** She had lots of insight to offer:

"There are options; you can pivot and reinvent yourself any time. There is no special prize that you get for doing things the harder way. If you need help or you want to access resources, just make the call. Also, your education doesn't have an expiry date. Before I started my program, I was feeling a bit self-conscious, y'know? I was wondering, 'am I gonna be the old lady in the classroom?' But whatever! There are all kinds of people at all different stages in college, and you never lose the ability to learn."

I told Kristal that I thought these were all really great points and recalled learning similar lessons from circumstances in my own life. Many people of all different ages have had educational journeys that don't necessarily fit a 'one-size-fits-all' prescription, and Kristal's experiences show that it is possible to find success despite facing significant challenges. Before concluding our interview, I thanked her again for agreeing to meet with me and share her story. I also **asked if she had any advice for students considering college or university.**

"Reach out to somebody who has recently taken your program and see if they will talk to you about what to expect. I really wish I had done that, since I was caught a bit off guard when I started. Also, if you feel hopeless, spend some time checking out what your student services have to offer. Even if you don't end up using them, it can be really helpful knowing that they're there. Plus, you're paying for it! There's empowerment in that. We're all having difficult feelings right now, whether it's your first year, your third year, or if this is the third program you've taken... it's all brand new territory, but we're in it together."





**A SPECIAL THANKS
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