

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE POST COVID ERA: Series IX



School Name: Iowa State University
Year: Senior
Major: Agricultural Communications
GPA: 2.9

Q: Since everything is online, what is your typical school day like?

So my typical school day, I wake up at around 8:30, and then usually I just kind of prioritize myself based on what I need to do. I kind of have a class schedule that I made myself so all of my classes are self-paced pretty much. I wake up, watch lectures, take notes and then I take a break in the afternoon. I do whatever I need to, grocery shop, clean, whatever, do laundry, and then later at night, I do all of my homework. It's pretty spread out but I like to keep it that way because I need time to mentally refresh and stay away from screens for a while.

Q: Are all of your lectures pre-recorded or are they in real-time?

All of them except for one of my classes are pre-recorded. I have a natural resources class that we do have Zoom calls for but those are just to answer questions, not really a lecture so everything else is pre-recorded.

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Q: How is it for you learning with pre-recorded classes? Do you find them at all understandable and engaging?

Yes, I see pluses and minuses. I would say it's easier for me to take notes because I can pause it if we're going too fast. I can just go back and watch it again but on the downside, I'm not able to ask questions and I'm not meeting with people who are in that class so I have no connections really. Usually, I'd find people who are in the same class as me and become friends with them, and we'd have like a group chat about the homework, or if I had questions I'd ask them. But I feel like now there's no connection with my peers or with my teacher. There's none of those relationships so it makes it kind of tough to stay engaged. I always second-guess myself because my teacher is not there to remind me 'hey there's an assignment due' or how to do the assignment because they don't talk about that in the lectures like they would have in a normal class. They just say the information and then expect us to go search for it on Canvas.

Q: As far as understanding the concepts that are being taught to you, how has that been going?

I would say I'm doing all right with it. Probably not as well as I would be in a normal lecture, but I think I've been relying more on my textbooks this year if that makes sense. I go there to look for my answers before I ask the professor but yeah it's been more difficult.

Q: Have you been using any outside resources to learn the lesson material?

Definitely. I use Chegg all the time. That's definitely one and I have to use YouTube, especially for my biology classes because some of the concepts I just didn't get or they just didn't go over it thoroughly enough for me.

Yeah definitely. You know I'm paying a lot for tuition and I see myself really only using a small portion of what I've been given through the university. I feel like I could get this for free. There's pretty much the same lectures on YouTube that I'm getting from the university. That's definitely a downside. I don't think I'm getting the quality of education I should be for the same amount of money I'm paying.



Q: Would you say that right now you feel like you're teaching yourself as opposed to your professors?

Yeah definitely. You know I'm paying a lot for tuition and I see myself really only using a small portion of what I've been given through the university. I feel like I could get this for free. There's pretty much the same lectures on YouTube that I'm getting from the university. That's definitely a downside. I don't think I'm getting the quality of education I should be for the same amount of money I'm paying.

Q: Has the university done anything to help students with this online learning?

They are offering wider spread Wi-Fi on campus and you can rent out a computer but it's kind of a hectic mess. I think they have a waiting list. I mean most kids do have their own laptops but since everyone at once has gone online, some people that used to rely on an iPad or a laptop are now renting those. Yeah, they have certain things in place, but not necessarily support for our education. It's more so support with technology.

Q: Have you been able to meet new people?

Not really. So we had a discussion when we first started our English class where we could introduce ourselves and talk about our experience. I watched a few of those videos of other students and we had to reply back but it's just not the same. It's not like you actually had a conversation with a student, it's like you had to upload this video and had to reply to someone else. It's not really like a personal feeling. So basically I would say no, I haven't met anyone new or formed any relationships.

Q: Say that you want to reach out to one of your classmates, is there a way to do that?

There is a way to do that. I could reach out to one of my classmates through Canvas but I'm not sure that everyone checks that, it's kind of a mess. You don't know which students are being active or actually engaging in the class. Usually, when you're in class, you get a feel for the people who want to be there and the people who are just there.

Definitely. Even last semester when we went partially online towards the end, my grades took a hit. There's just so much difficulty trying to understand assignments and making sure you're getting everything. I'm just now learning at the pace that I used to because I'm a very visual learner. So yeah it's been very difficult and I do foresee my grades taking another hit.

Q: Have your teachers had any issues moving everything online?

I would say yes. I've already experienced many issues with my assignments not being turned in. My professors emailed me saying 'you didn't turn in your assignment' and I was like 'wait, yes I did'. So it's assignments and getting them in and also our Zoom calls haven't worked, or we've had to cancel them because students couldn't use their computer or the sound didn't work.

Q: Do you feel that your older teachers are having an especially hard time transitioning online?

Yes. I would especially say, my biology teacher. He's been there for a while and I know that he's a good teacher because I have friends who have taken the in-person class with him. It's just so hard for him to relay his information when he can't read a classroom. It's so different because even if you were in a classroom with a mask on, you can't really read the people's faces and see if they're confused or whatever. So really there is a definite communication barrier and that has effects on their teaching.

Q: Are you worried at all about keeping your grades up and succeeding this semester?

Definitely. Even last semester when we went partially online towards the end, my grades took a hit. There's just so much difficulty trying to understand assignments and making sure you're getting everything. I'm just now learning at the pace that I used to because I'm a very visual learner. So yeah it's been very difficult and I do foresee my grades taking another hit.

Q: What is something you'd want to be implemented in order to help you out?

I would say something that would be extremely beneficial would be more time to do homework assignments. I realized that it's difficult for some people because it's very time consuming, but I do think that my professors are giving us more homework because they're trying to give us more practice since we're not able to be in class. It's just all a lot on us and I'm taking a full class load so it does get pretty hectic and I don't have time for anything else. So I think more time would definitely help.

