



GATOR NATION STAYS CONNECTED DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DANIELLE RANDLE | EDEN MILLER

As the University of Florida (UF) moved all courses online due to COVID-19 social distancing during the Spring 2020 semester, the abrupt change in teaching and learning impacted the entire student body and faculty. On March 9, 2020, university leaders made the decision to transition all course work to an online format, to ensure the safety of students and faculty members. Teachers and students worked together to develop and navigate fully-online class structures. Students attended classes at normally-scheduled times via Zoom, an online video conference platform.

Kacie Durance, a UF Agriculture Operations Management Spring 2020 graduate, said, "Zoom keeps all of us accountable. We still are required to meet at our specified class times we've had since the beginning of the semester."

The abrupt changes to the semester impacted everyone in the university community. The adjustments in courses, communication, and graduation ceremonies uniquely impacted the senior class scheduled to graduate in May 2020. After the initial announcement of the online course mandate, seniors were quick to acclimate and accept the challenge to complete online learning. Digital communication was crucial, and online technologies helped seniors adapt, continue connections. From social media to digital learning platforms like Zoom, everyone did their best to make the most of the situation.

After President Fuchs urged students to return home on March 17, many graduating seniors followed his directives. They urgently uprooted from Gainesville to return home and practice social distancing with loved ones.

On March 17, when graduation was postponed from May 1 to July 31, many seniors struggled. Many graduating students no longer had the opportunity to walk across the stage with their friends and classmates.

Graduating seniors were also impacted by the ever-changing economy. As the nation fought to reduce the spread of COVID-19, all businesses were impacted drastically during social distancing.

As UF graduates neared the month of May, it was vital to look back on their time at the university and reflect on how much they grew personally and professionally. In unprecedented times, it was important to remain positive and remind themselves of their successes still.

UF Agricultural Education and Communication Spring 2020 Graduate, Eden Miller, said, "It is hard not to be sad when imagining the countless memories and fellowship not to be had during the rest of our senior year. However, we are Gators. We don't let something like this keep us down. After all, in all kinds of weather, we'll all stick together."

Throughout the semester, seniors learned to become more resilient, adaptable, positive, and open-minded. They leveraged digital communication technologies to continue relationships, as well as say their goodbyes to classmates and professors.

The students' skills and resiliency will help show potential employers that they are able to handle change without skipping a beat. As Spring 2020 University of Florida graduates embark into the world, the Gator Nation is everywhere, supporting and cheering them on every step of the way.

"IT HAS BEEN CHALLENGING TO LEAVE MY ROOMMATES, FRIENDS, AND THE PLACE I HAVE CALLED HOME FOR SO LONG."

- DANIELLE RANDLE, UF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION SPRING 2020 GRADUATE

