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Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on College Students through an Analysis of Oral Histories

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MIRANDA SEGALLA (Cell and Molecular Biology)

Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on College students through an Analysis of Oral Histories

Sponsor: Andrea Rusnock (History)

COVID-19 has caused immense pain and suffering across the globe. Families are unable to spend time together, people are dying alone, and thousands of people have lost their jobs. My honors project explores the different ways COVID-19 has impacted students from different backgrounds and shaped their experiences. My research is based on an analysis of 25 of the 160 oral histories collected as part of The COVID-19 Oral History Project, with a majority of them coming from students at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas and Northeastern University in Boston. Demographic factors such as age, where they live and what year they are in school were most influential in determining their experiences with COVID-19. My research illustrated the different hardships individuals felt throughout the pandemic. High school seniors shared missing major milestones in their lives, such as graduation, prom, and their senior year in general. Incoming college freshmen had to adapt to college life virtually and college students who were dependent on housing at their university shared the experience of being told they had to move out of the dorms - when there was really nowhere else for them to go. Through my analysis of the oral histories, I have realized the importance of healthy behaviors and getting vaccinated, both of which can contribute to immunity within communities. Once immunity has been achieved, students could hopefully return to their normal lives. I have created a public service announcement (PSA) in the form of a flyer for URI students to spread awareness on the impact the pandemic has had on my age group along with ways we can stay safe and allow future students to be able to experience a normal education, without some of the unique hardships seen within the oral histories.