

With the COVID-19 pandemic everything seems to change from day to day. Nothing exemplifies this feeling better than when it was time to go home for Thanksgiving break. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire announced that we had the option not to come back after Thanksgiving with classes moving online, but in the end, it was our choice weather or not to come back. Originally, I had thought that I would be heading back to campus after the break since every time I went home my brain went on vacation mode. But my mom wanted me to stay home, so home I stayed.

Preparing to bring my things back home was a stressful time, should I bring all my clothes back? Will I need these textbooks I have not used all semester suddenly? Will I be able to fit everything into my car? After a quick Target run, I was able to start packing up my things that had taken both my parents and me to move here the first time. Packing up my car felt weird knowing that the next time I came back to campus would not be until the start of February, nearly two months from that time. Even being on campus for only about three months I had started to get into a helpful routine. Every morning I would wake up and enjoy my morning coffee and watch a little T.V before finishing up a few assignments for class. Then I would head down to lower campus for lunch at Davies student center. With knowing I was about to leave campus for the semester, I knew that I had to use up my remaining dining dollars resulting in me drinking more coffee from the Starbucks on campus than I have ever drunk before in one week. From classes being moved online I was able to leave earlier than I was planning, making my last minuet arrangements work just in time. Finally, it came time for me to make the almost two-hour drive back to my hometown, jamming to the radio, wondering what the next few weeks would have in store for me.

Thanksgiving of 2020 looked much different than I was used to. Our family traditions that have been in place for over ten years were put on hold for the safety of others. Instead of seeing our family friends in person we had to do it over facetime with my dad operating the phone with no clue to what he was doing. One of our biggest mistakes of the Thanksgiving meal was sending him to go shopping for the pumpkin pie ingredients. Instead of getting pumpkin puree, he came home with pumpkin spice for coffee! My sister and her husband were able to make it for Thanksgiving which was the only thing that made the day feel like a holiday. Trying to watch the Thanksgiving parade was a little depressing being how there was no audience in attendance. Instead of watching the Cowboys game all the way through, we watched survivor for the first time. In total, it was still a fun Thanksgiving that I was able to spend with family, even if it looked much different.

After Thanksgiving it was time to get back into the routine of doing school every day, which proved to be easier said than done. Being home brought many new distractions that I was not used to such as having full access to the entirety of my book collection, barking dogs, and my parents trying to talk to me when I was in different meetings. The assignments that I started to put off suddenly became due and my grandma had to come down for an emergent surgery adding even more stress to my plate. Eventually once again I was able to get into a schedule and was able to find a study space away from any distractions. Being home started to feel normal once again with good food and people who I can always laugh with. News of a promising vaccine has helped to raise spirits for the holiday season. This year with everyone being home we made our Christmas cookies early and even made lefse for the first time in years. My mom decided to go all out with Christmas decorations having the tree up even before Thanksgiving. With the inside of my house feeling so festive, the only thing that is missing is the snow on the ground.

This once again brings me to the present day. Trying to prepare for finals has been difficult with this being my first semester of. The only things I have left now is turning in some final projects and putting the extra hours into studying. From talking with my few friends who decided to stay on campus, I have concluded that I made the right decision for myself with coming home even with having to make my own makeshift study area. When talking about the current student population on campus, it seems like a ghost town. With the struggle of once again having to find a new normal with school during a global pandemic, it helps to keep in mind that I just have to play it day by day and be flexible.