

CMC Parent News - Spring 2020

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CMCers at Home: A Day in a Safer-at-Home Life

The New Daily Life of CMCers

Claremont McKenna College's small, tight-knit community thrives when students, faculty, and staff can engage with one another on-campus regularly. Over the past few weeks, CMCers, like college students all over the world, have had to transition to online learning, and have had to find creative ways to recreate this environment virtually.



Although it hasn't been easy, they have done so with strength, composure, and gratitude.

Here is an inside look to how six CMC students have settled into their new routines.

Kylie Bernardi '20

Spokane, WA

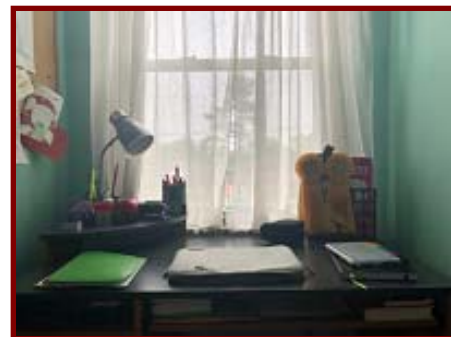
I am currently studying from home in Spokane, WA. My day usually begins by heading into the kitchen to get some coffee, getting ready for the day (yes, I still try to get ready everyday), and then heading into my classes. I start my day with my Virology class which is primarily lecture based where the professor presents a PowerPoint presentation to us. He also gives us a lot of time to ask questions regarding COVID-19. Such a good time to be taking a virology class! I then head into my Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience class. We generally are asked to watch a prerecorded lecture ahead of time and then do worksheets in Zoom breakout rooms during class.

Over my lunch break, I meet with my thesis group, as I am doing a Team Masters Project with Keck Graduate Institute to discuss our project and upcoming presentations. After lunch I go to my Neuroscience lab, which has been quite interesting. We did a few virtual labs right after we left campus and now are working on independent projects because we cannot actually be in a lab space. After my classes, I try to study for a few hours before spending some time with my family. I get to end my days with a large Zoom call with my friends, so we can remain connected throughout all of this!

Krista Cabrera '20

Hamilton, NJ

The transition to online learning hasn't been easy, but I know students and faculty alike are trying their best to adjust to this new norm. It is harder than I originally imagined to be as focused and engaged in class as I normally would be, especially because my desk is in front of my window (see picture). I find comfort in talking with my friends both at CMC and at other schools, knowing that they are also going through this challenging time with me. My friends and I are doing our best to stay in touch through our group chat that we talk in daily, as well as—weekly Wine Wednesdays. Some of us have class together which helps maintain a sense of normalcy too.



At home I've started cooking with my mom each night and baking on the weekends. It is a very soothing and time-consuming activity which makes it ideal for the quarantine life. I also go on walks around my neighborhood with my dog almost every day to get some fresh air and stretch my legs too. Instead of thinking about how trapped I feel at home, I try my best to remember how lucky I am to be safe at home. This shift to online learning has not been easy but I feel very fortunate to be going through it with my family and friends by my side.

Sophia de Castro '23

Newton, MA

Since returning home from campus, I have tried to rebuild some sort of routine to take care of myself mentally and physically and to keep up with my academic work.

On a typical weekday in quarantine, I wake up at around 9 am and motivate myself to work out. I prepare a late breakfast and try not to overwhelm myself as I check the latest news. As a result of the three-hour time difference between the East and West Coasts, all of my classes are now later in the afternoon or evening, so I usually get some homework done before attending class.



At times, it has been difficult to balance my time between doing work and away from work now that I do not have built-in transitions like meals with friends, on-campus events, or job shifts.



However, I am grateful to my professors who have been accommodating in adjusting the syllabus, checking in on us each Zoom class, and trying to keep us engaged in the material.

For one of my class's final projects, I was able to get month-long free access to Adobe's Creative Cloud through the CMC ITS Help Desk, so I have been enjoying working and experimenting with photo and video editing programs for homework and in my free time!

After about two Zoom classes each day, I try to get outside when the weather is nice--which, unfortunately, is not very often in a New England spring--to skateboard and pretend I am still riding around campus! I end most days FaceTiming friends, playing my guitalele or saxophone, or binging shows.



On the weekends, I enjoy testing recipes from Bon Appétit Magazine, Skyping my family spread out all over the world, and having movie nights with my parents.

I am fortunate to have my own quiet space to do my work and to be home safe when I know that is not the case for all CMC students. It can be hard to look into the uncertain future, so I am doing my best to connect with the people I love right now and to make the most out of the time I have time in insolation to reflect on my priorities, to listen to myself, and to ensure that we will come out of this as stronger and better versions of ourselves.

Savi Rathi '21

Chicago, IL

This is an extremely strange and difficult time for many, but I am grateful for my professors and the CMC community for providing me with continuous support. I am a Media Studies major, so the majority of my courses heavily rely on in-person meetings, use of studio spaces, and specialized equipment that is only available on campus. As a result of the abrupt shift to online courses, many of my classes were forced to completely redesign their syllabi.

My courses that were most impacted by the shift to online learning were Autism Center and Between Analog + Digital Printmaking. Autism Center offers field experience in the application of behavior modification principles with autistic children at CMC's Claremont Autism Center. The course is centered around our supervised in-

person interactions in which we are able to utilize our knowledge of behavior principles in a real-life setting. Due to the shift to online learning, the Autism Center has ended our interactions with the children. Now, we learn about autism through documentaries, films, and tv shows. Between Analog + Digital Printmaking is a course centered around the crossover between digital and analog printmaking. In this course, we relied heavily on systems including monoprinting, transfer drawing, and silk solar plates. These systems were made possible through the use of Scripps's printmaking studio that provided all the necessary machines and materials. However, my professor for this course has been incredible as she purchased and shipped numerous supplies for my classmates who wanted to continue to pursue various aspects of printmaking at home.



It has been difficult working on assignments online rather than in-person as many of my courses require the use of digital platforms that we had just begun to learn this semester. However, this is an extremely interesting time, and my professors are encouraging us to incorporate this within our projects/assignments and they have found fascinating ways to include coronavirus within our course discussions. It has taken a while to adjust to my new normal, but I am finally getting used to courses being online and my new class

schedule.

When I am not in class, I spend a lot of time connecting with my CMC friends. We FaceTime a lot and create Zoom calls when a large number of us want to get together and play games. Another great way I pass my time is playing video games with friends. Almost every night we either get competitive playing each other in Mario Kart or visit each other's islands in Animal Crossing. When I'm not connecting with friends, I am either napping, studying, or taking my dogs for their 4th walk of the day.

Mimi Thompson '21

Monterey, CA

I didn't expect my junior spring to be online. However, it isn't something I haven't done before. Growing up with floods and protests in Bangkok, Thailand prepared me for distance learning already. Although I couldn't head home to weather the quarantine storm, I feel fortunate to be living with fellow student Grace Wang '21 at our friend Julia Hwang's '21 home in Monterey, California.

On a typical Tuesday, I wake up and get ready for my Psychology Research Methods class. I love this class because Professor Piercarlo Valdesolo makes the Zoom video



format feel inclusive and engaging, encouraging lots of in-class discussion and jokes. For our research practicum, we had to convert in-person experiments to online surveys and have been collecting data for a few weeks. Messaging people to participate in my study has been a good way to reconnect with friends!



My Psychology class at the Autism Centre couldn't continue as usual, where we help children with autism develop their behavioral and social skills. Instead, we're tasked with watching movies with autistic protagonists and writing reflections. *Life, Animated* is a great documentary, for anyone interested!

With one Zoom class per day, I spend my time doing homework or hanging out with Grace and Julia. Today, I had virtual office hours with my Psychology and Accounting professors. I had a call with a student who is pitching in "Sage Tank,"—a virtual startup competition I am hosting with my 5C Club, Pomona Ventures. Also, I Face-Time with my CMC friends.

What keeps me going are my weekly family trivia nights (spread across the US, UK, and Asia), emails from the College Programming Board (CPB), and the prospects of living with my best friends from CMC this summer!

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CMC Connects: Together, Virtually

By Rick Verjee P'21

During these uncertain times, we are all looking for ways to connect and support each other through the changes in our work and social habits. In that spirit, CMC, the Alumni Association, and the Parent Network have put together a series of virtual gatherings designed to keep our community informed and healthy, and to help us remain connected and supported during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Virtual programming started in early April. Since then we have had the opportunity to hear from CMC's esteemed faculty on timely topics, shared practical strategies, and gathered with purpose. Overall, the feedback to date shows sessions have been very well attended with positive comments and requests for more topics. A sampling of some of the sessions which have been held already include:

- [How COVID-19 is Affecting Our Democracy with Professor Jack Pitney](#)
- [Anxiety Relieving Strategies to Use Yourself and With Your Teams with Laura \(May\) Grisolano '86](#)
- [Imagination During a Pandemic: How our Failure of Imagination Led to a Pandemic with Professor Amy Kind](#)
- [Maximizing LinkedIn with Erikan Obotetukudo '13](#)

If you missed an event and would like to catch up, you can find a full list of recorded events in the [Virtual Events Video Library](#). To see what's next, visit the [Event Page](#) or the Claremont McKenna College Parents and Families Facebook group and click the [Events Tab](#) at the top of the page.

Here are some sessions to look forward to:

- How Shark Research Leads to Conservation with Steven T. Kessel, director of marine research for the Daniel P. Haerther Center for Conservation and Research at the John G. Shedd Aquarium
- Pandemics in the Transformation of Colonial America with Professor Daniel Livesay, associate professor of history at CMC, on Tuesday, May 26.

Hope to see you at a virtual session soon!

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A CMC Exodus: Six Word Memoirs from CMCers

By Linda Willard P'23 and Nancy Ozizmir P'22

Student life has changed drastically over the last few weeks since CMC students made the transition from a residential college environment to distance learning.

We thought it would be interesting to ask our CMCers about this transition and their new normal in the form of a six-word memoir. The six-word memoir, legend has it, was popularized by author Ernest Hemingway. At CMC, these memoirs normally come from graduating seniors, who are asked to reflect on their four years at CMC.

Students provided us their six-word memoirs to describe the exodus home and life in the time of COVID-19.

“Grand Canyon camping fell by wayside.” Annika Ozizmir '22

“The DOS thought I had Covid.” Stephen Willard '23

“Professor asked a question. WiFi failed.” Sydney Heath '22

“Flexibility, uncertainty, cooking, still school, weird.” Alex Kenworthy '20

“What’s a hug feel like?” Matiss Ozols '21

“Learned to be content with silence.” David Ying '21

“More sleep and many more naps.” Makenna Mahrer '23

“Zooming? More like crawling (backwards underground.)” Zoe Carlson '22

“My family hosts daily happy hours.” Shanil Verjee '21

“Sibling ping pong record: 100- 101” Seth Taylor-Brill '20

“Flat tire on my birthday, fun!” Cameron Cash '20

“Missing my friends, so playing solitaire.” Sofia Rojas '23

“I miss sushi nights at Scripps” Christian Campbell '23

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Fighting for a Nation During Midterms

By Sydney Heath '21

CLAREMONT, Calif. -- While many college students worry about getting good grades, going to parties and avoiding gaining the “freshman 15” pounds, sophomore Yara Ismael has been busy organizing protests, lobbying Congress, and publishing in the Wall Street Journal.

Since leaving Iraq in 2014, Ismael has become one of the United States’ most outspoken activists for Kurdish rights. Ismael’s dedication to the Kurdish cause began when she moved to Corona, California at age 13. She wanted to maintain her connection to her Kurdish roots and deeply identified with the plight of the Kurdish people in the Middle East.

The Kurdish people make up one of the world’s largest nations without an independent state. They occupy an area known as Kurdistan, which spans parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Armenia. The Kurds have fought for more than 100 years to create an independent Kurdistan after facing extreme discrimination and violence in their respective countries.

In October, Ismael, who identifies as Kurdish, Iraqi and American, helped organize a protest in L.A. that drew over 300 people. This is substantial considering the Kurdish population in the U.S. is only 40,000.

The demonstration took place in front of the Turkish Consulate in response to the removal of U.S. troops from the Syrian border by the administration of President Donald Trump. This action gave President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey the green light to enter Syria and overtake the Kurdish army at the Syrian border.

“It proved to me -- and the world -- that neither democracy nor anything else is powerful enough to prevent one man’s decision from destroying a nation, a movement, an aspiring democracy, and a whole people,” Ismael said. “It reaffirmed to me the Kurdish saying that there are ‘no friends but the mountains.’”

In November, Ismael co-authored an article for the Wall Street Journal about the Trump administration’s decision. The article was titled: “Heartbreak for Kurdish-Americans: It’s painful to watch our adopted country betray our homeland.”



Following the protest, Ismael flew to Washington D.C. to speak to representatives and other government officials to make sure the U.S. government was informed on the ways in which the Kurds were suffering in the Middle East. She considered her visit a success in that two significant acts were passed by Congress following her trip: the first condemned Turkey’s attack on the Kurds in Syria, and the second imposed sanctions on Turkey. “We felt like we were being heard, and it was a really eye-opening and learning experience for me,” Ismael said.

Ismael is currently pursuing a major in International Relations with a sequence in Human Rights. Her confident, strong-willed personality does not fit her small stature, and her large, lively brown eyes do not reflect the few hours of sleep she gets most nights as she tries to balance activism with schoolwork. In the midst of planning the October protest in L.A., Ismael had to drop one of her more demanding classes and decided to take a break from her job at the financial aid office.

Ismael has continued her activism through organizing phone banks, fundraising and working to unite the Kurdish communities across the country. She hopes to continue to spread awareness for the situation of the Kurds and feels that officials are generally open to learning more. The issue lies in the fact that Kurdish communities have not worked together to make their cause known.

“I think that goes back to the organizational weakness of the Kurdish community here, which also needs to work harder than every other community, not just because of the complexity of the situation but also because we have four other nations deliberately spreading false information and countering any efforts our communities make,” Ismael explained.

The Kurdish community is lucky to have found such an unrelenting, passionate advocate who will no doubt play an important role in persuading the U.S. to reaffirm its alliance with the Kurds.

Mark the Moment: Acknowledging May 16, 2020

As we look forward to the day that the CMC community can gather together to celebrate the Class of 2020 in person, Claremont McKenna College plans to honor this incredible group of seniors on their originally scheduled commencement day.



Each senior should check their mailbox for a package designed to *Mark the Moment!* The contents of the package will inspire nostalgia—and a well-deserved sense of pride, and will help seniors reflect on their four years at CMC as we wait for the day we can celebrate together on campus.

In addition, Associated Students of CMC (ASCMC) and senior class leadership are also planning to bring the class together via a Zoom celebration on **Saturday, May 16 at 1:00 p.m. Pacific Time.**

When your senior receives this package and/or joins the Zoom celebration, make sure to snap a picture if possible and share on social media. Don't forget to tag us on Instagram ([@cmcalumniandparents](#)) or post it to the Facebook private group ([Claremont McKenna College Parents and Families](#)). We'll make sure to share the moments you capture with the rest of the community online!

CMC's Career Services Resources for the Class of 2020

By Michelle Cash P'20

As the mom of a graduating senior, I have watched the events of the past two months with worry for the health of the nation coupled with a sense of loss for our son and our family as we missed several “last” milestones at CMC. We missed watching our son close out his lifetime of playing baseball, going through commencement in mid-May, and celebrating the other moments that mark the end of a college experience. I say this without any negativity towards CMC as an institution, because I believe that the college has handled this challenging situation with thoughtful and deliberative actions and decisions. Nowhere has this been more apparent than the way in which CMC is working to support its seniors as they make the transition from college life to employment or additional educational options.



In typical fashion, CMC is tackling the challenge of supporting its seniors in their efforts to secure full-time employment or graduate school admission with gusto. The staff at the Soll Center for Student Opportunity are working toward 100% placement for the Class of 2020, and has already connected with 95% of the senior class. As of this newsletter, approximately half of the seniors have full-time employment or plan to attend graduate school. Ursula Diamond, director of student opportunities, stated that they have found that full-time hiring is more stable than internship options during this time, although some employers have delayed start dates for full-time positions.

The Soll Center staff has also ramped up its outreach efforts to employers, with an initial focus on contacting employers that were on campus recently to follow up regarding job opportunities. They are sending resume books to these employers, designed to showcase seniors who would be a good fit for an opportunity within their organization. This outreach has been well received by employers and appreciated by seniors.

- Note: The work of the staff at the Soll Center for Student Opportunity does not stop with our seniors! They have also created a team dedicated to revising the Sponsored Internship Experience (SIE) funding policy to reflect the reality of the current travel and shelter-in-place guidelines. This includes a redesigned application process to allow students as much time as possible to figure out their summer plans. Staff members have also contacted every SIE applicant on an individual basis to provide guidance and coaching on how to proceed.

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An Update on the 2020 Commencement Ceremony

Each spring, students, families, faculty, and staff come together on a May afternoon to honor the incredible accomplishments of the graduating class. Due to the health threat of COVID-19, the College has postponed the commencement ceremonies to a later date. Claremont McKenna College will not replace commencement with a virtual ceremony.



The College is currently working with senior class leadership, faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees to find a new date to host an **on-campus, in-person** celebration. CMC is and will always be committed to the health and safety of its community and will wait to announce this new date. Once health officials, state, and local governments decide it is safe to gather together, CMC will send the new date to students and their families. The new date will be communicated with plenty of advance notice and will allow students, families, and guests have time to make effective travel plans.

The College looks forward to a joyous celebration, and the moment when our community gathers together in Claremont to celebrate the Class of 2020.

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Parent Network Board Meetings

The Parent Network Board meets quarterly to discuss board business and to hear from College leadership. Read the minutes from the meeting [here](#).