

CMC Parent News - Fall 2020

In this issue:

[Student Summer Experiences](#)

[Curtis Salinger '22](#) • [Marycarmen Montanez '22](#) • [Abrahan Vasquez '23](#)

[How Can a First-Year Feel Like a College Student?](#)

[Viviendo en Casa: Cómo Ayudar a su Estudiante de Primer Año Sentirse como Estudiante Universitario](#)

[College at Home: Supporting and Encouraging Our Students](#)

[Getting Fit at Home with CMS Recreation](#)

[Can You Offer a Micro-Internship to a CMCer?](#)

[We Invite You to Get Involved](#)

Student Summer Experiences

Read how students spent their summer!

This summer was different than any other. CMC students found unique ways to gain professional and academic insights through virtual, yet immersive, summer experiences and internships.

Read their first-hand accounts below!

Curtis Salinger '22

During this totally non-conventional summer, I had the ability to work with Handshake, an early talent recruiting platform that aims to democratize job opportunities across the nation. It was a fascinating time to work with the company as they made the decision, in the spring, to build out an entirely new virtual "career fair tool" in anticipation of the virtual fall. I got the unique opportunity to watch something go from an idea to a full-fledged product over the span of the summer, and I found that so cool! Handshake is also at a point where they have solidified themselves in the four-year college and university space, so they were gearing up to pivot their sales focus into the community college space. I pioneered that shift by researching community college structures in each of the 50 states, and assisted in developing the sales plan for each state.



My main takeaway from this summer is that workplace culture is everything. Going into this virtual summer experience, I was incredibly anxious about developing meaningful relationships with other individuals in the company. I worried that I was not going to have the time between meetings to walk back to my desk with people, learn their names, or set up a time to get to know them. This fear was quelled during our “All-Hands intern welcome event” where the whole company got on Zoom and all of the interns introduced themselves. The Zoom chat box exploded with positivity, emojis, ++ (the internal sign of support), and all of the employees unmuted, cheered, and welcomed us. My personal Slack DMs filled with messages saying “Hi! Welcome to the company!” “I’m so glad you’re here!” “Put 30 minutes on my calendar and let’s chat!” I had meetings with so many people. In fact for the first two weeks it felt like I did hardly any work because I was so busy getting to know these amazingly talented and friendly people. It is amazing to feel that much support and that sense of welcoming, especially virtually, and as I move forward in my career I will continue to look for a workplace culture like Handshake’s.

I am so thankful for Tony Sidhom '17 for taking the chance on me as an intern and for being so supportive as my manager. He set a gold standard as a manager who cared about both my personal and professional growth. He asked what I wanted to learn and then went out of his way to connect me with the people at Handshake who could teach me. He supported me in my moments of failure and celebrated me in my moments of success. I am excited to continue my work as I return with Handshake as a Business Analytics and Operations intern and cannot wait to get back to work!

Marycarmen Montanez '22

As my sophomore spring was coming to a strange end, I crossed my fingers that my summer experience would occur in-person, and that I would have the opportunity to return to the community that I learned to love the previous summer. Unfortunately, that did not come to fruition and, in April, I received an email that my teaching fellowship with Breakthrough San Juan Capistrano (SJC) would be virtual. While I waited for my teaching fellowship to begin, I virtually joined a second role with the campaign of progressive candidate Fatima Iqbal-Zubair for State Assembly for District 64, as a policy and communications fellow.

At Breakthrough, intentionality, community, and growth are emphasized as we work with seventh through ninth grade students as their teachers and mentors. I was unaware of the lasting impact last summer’s experience would leave on me, and I was compelled to return for another summer! In the summer of 2019, I taught *College Skills* to rising ninth grade students, and this summer I taught Algebra 1 to a cohort of rising ninth graders. This year was startling to experience since it was online instead of in-person. Adjusting to teaching, lessons, and event planning



within a virtual setting was difficult. However, these challenges were also opportunities for learning moments and growth. That is exactly what I found with all the ups and downs, which gave me a valuable and enriching experience. As one of my colleagues said on one of our *many* Zoom calls, “It’s strange, because I am looking at a screen, but I can feel that I am a part of this awesome community.”

When I was not at Breakthrough SJC teaching and learning about the teaching side of education, I was working as a policy and communications fellow and learning about education policy. Working for Fatima Iqbal-Zubair, who was previously a public-school science teacher in Watts, CA and has her community’s best interest at heart, has been an inspiring experience. I’ve learned so much about local and state politics, the role that education policy plays, California’s education system, and educational issues such as the school-to-prison pipeline. Despite the virtual component of this summer, I learned and grew so much professionally and as an individual.

Abrahan Vasquez '23

This summer I conducted research as a part of Professor Aaron Leconte’s lab group at the W.M. Keck Science Department here at The Claremont Colleges. Or not really “right here,” more like “virtually here.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent social distancing measures, I had already arranged for my summer internship at the Keck Science department. Through this internship, I planned on gaining lab bench experience and learning about the different papers and group projects recently worked on. Unfortunately, that didn’t fully come to fruition. Despite the limitations of not being in person, I still got the most out of my summer through this opportunity and was able to set the stage for further career and personal development.



At the beginning of my internship, the main challenge was simply gaining a clear understanding of the material reviewed during our literature reviews. When we did outside reading, I would get lost in the terminology that connected the concepts. I frequently asked questions, but I was still unsure. I realized I had to do something in order to get the most out of this experience and applied what learned at CMC this past school year... I went to office hours! My frequent meetings with my lab professor allowed me to discuss topics and ideas that I was confused about and it definitely made a difference! I was filled with pride every time I recognized and understood an idea or conception from my readings. Now, I am confident in my place in the lab and I know I belong there.

I am fascinated by the past work and potential of Professor Leconte's group work, so I have decided to commit myself to a project through the Keck Science department that will take about two to three summers to complete. Another major factor in this decision is that I want to start and complete my own project in the lab starting from scratch and in a few years leave legacy by laying the foundations for future work. I'm planning to develop a system to increase the accuracy of DNA-producing enzymes. We already have the foundations for this system from another research group, but it will be my responsibility to optimize it for our own uses, and should my project succeed, I would be making an important contribution to our subset of modified DNA research. Narrowing the scope would allow us to develop improved DNA-producing enzymes that have greater accuracy. With greater accuracy, we will be able to synthesize DNA sequences that we can put to unique applications such as producing DNA-based gels for medical purposes.

Doing research this summer has given me a new sense of purpose and belonging at Claremont McKenna College and that makes me miss campus even more! Despite the circumstances, I'm glad to know I have in-person lab work, among many other things to look forward to when it's safe to go back.

[Back to top](#)

How Can a First-Year Student Feel Like a College Student?

By Rick Verjee P'21

Ever since your student received that highly anticipated acceptance letter from CMC, they have likely been dreaming of their freshman year at college; all the new experiences, orientation, meeting and making new friends, joining clubs and sports, gaining some independence from home, and so much more!



Then came spring and COVID-19, and high school seniors were sent home to complete their final year online from their bedrooms.

Fortunately, there were only a few weeks remaining until the end of school and they were able to press on and graduate, albeit, without all the fanfare that typically comes along with high school graduation. But as CMC made the difficult decision to move the fall semester fully online, our first-year students returned to their home-based virtual classrooms, and their dreams of first year experiences were altered by the global pandemic.

We know the entire CMC team is going well beyond the normal call of duty to make this an engaging, fun, and unique educational year for students, with innovative new classes, a wide range of virtual

activities, and personalized student support. There are several tools in our parental tool boxes, however, that might also help them feel like full-fledged college students, even though physically they may still be at home. Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, Diana (D.T.) Graves '98, recently shared these tips and reminders:

- **Responsibility** - College students take on tons of responsibilities when on campus. If they don't already have significant responsibilities at home, think about transferring some of those typical household tasks over, while staying attentive to their academic demands.
- **Freedom** – Relax or remove curfews; consider allowing them a bit more freedom so long as they are communicative and responsible with that freedom.
- **Time management** – Avoid waking them up or reminding them of appointments. Let your student learn from their mistakes, but feel free to flag seriously concerning time-management issues to the Dean of Students Office.
- **Re-direct** – During Orientation, students were introduced to a plethora of resources at CMC. When your student comes to you with a “college issue,” try to redirect the impulse to solve the problem for them by asking if they remember what kind of CMC resources are available for that issue. If they don't remember, encourage them to reach out to the Dean of Students Office. This will instill independence and confidence, and building these connections may actually help ensure long-term college success.
- **Routine** – Creating a routine makes a huge difference in succeeding at college. Students living at home are still very much a part of the family and should be expected to contribute and communicate. Build routines within the family structure and avoid unexpected events. There are far fewer conflicts when people's schedules are clear to one another.
- **Boundaries** – Respect boundaries! Post your student's class schedule and avoid their learning space during those times. Consider how many times a week you might talk with your student if they were in the dorms. If it is once a week, then try to limit “checking in” accordingly.
- **Grades** – Ask fewer questions about grades. Instead, focus discussions around what they are learning in their classes.

Unlike some high schools, our first-year students are now in the driver's seat. CMC will be in constant communication with the student, and much less so with the parent. As parents, however, it is natural to have general questions about college. A great resource for you to connect with other parents via the private Facebook group – [Claremont McKenna College Parents and Families](#).

[Back to top](#)

Viviendo en Casa: Cómo Ayudar a su Estudiante de Primer Año Sentirse como Estudiante

Universitario

Por Rick Verjee P'21 | Traducido por Brandon Ruiz '21

Desde el momento en que su estudiante recibió esa carta de aceptación tan anticipada de parte de CMC, probablemente ha estado soñando con su primer año en la universidad; todas las nuevas experiencias, orientación, conociendo y haciendo nuevas amistades, inscribiéndose en clubs y deportes, consiguiendo independencia de casa, ¡y mucho más!

Luego vino la primavera y COVID-19, y los estudiantes en sus últimos años de la secundaria fueron enviados a casa para completar sus últimos años en línea desde sus cuartos. Afortunadamente, solo quedaban pocas semanas para el fin del año y fueron capaces de seguir adelante y graduarse, aunque, sin toda la fanfarria que típicamente acompaña la graduación de la escuela secundaria. Pero cuando CMC tomó la difícil decisión de mudar el semestre de otoño completamente en línea, nuestros estudiantes de primer año regresaron a sus aulas virtuales basado en casa, sus sueños de experiencias como estudiante universitario de primer año fueron alterados por la pandemia global.

Sabemos que el equipo entero de CMC está sobrepasando lo requerido para crear un año educativo, interesante, divertido, y único para los estudiantes, con clases nuevas e innovadoras, con una amplia variedad de actividades virtuales y apoyo personalizado para los estudiantes. Sin embargo, hay varios instrumentos en nuestras cajas de herramientas de padres que podrán ayudarlos a sentirse como estudiantes universitarios establecidos, aunque físicamente estén en casa.

Diana (D.T) Graves '98, la vicepresidenta asociada y decana de estudiantes, compartió recientemente estos consejos y recordatorios:

- **Responsabilidad:** Los estudiantes universitarios asumen bastantes responsabilidades cuando están presente en el campus. Considere transferir algunas de las responsabilidades domésticas típicas del hogar.
- **Libertad:** Ajuste o elimine horarios establecidos cuando eran estudiantes en la secundaria. Permítales visitar lugares que anteriormente no estaban permitidos.
- **Gestión del tiempo:** Evite despertarlos o recordarles de citas.
- **Redirigir:** Durante la orientación, estudiantes están introducidos a una plétora de recursos en CMC. Cuando su estudiante viene a usted con un “problema universitario”, dirígalos suavemente al recurso apropiado. Esto inculcará independencia y confianza, y construir estas conexiones podrán ayudar a garantizar el éxito universitario a largo plazo.
- **Rutina:** Creando una rutina hace una gran diferencia en el éxito en la universidad. Construya una rutina dentro de la estructura familiar y evite eventos inesperados.
- **Límites:** ¡Respete los límites! Publique el horario de clases de su estudiante y evite su espacio de estudio durante esos tiempos. Considere cuántas veces a la semana usted podría hablar con su

estudiante si estuviera en los dormitorios. Deje que ellos les comuniquen como les va es sus estudios.

- **Calificaciones:** Haga menos preguntas sobre las calificaciones. En lugar, centre las discusiones sobre lo que están aprendiendo en sus clases.

Nuestros estudiantes ahora están en el asiento de conductor. CMC estará en constante comunicación con el estudiante y menos con los padres. Como padres, es natural tener preguntas generales sobre la universidad. Un recurso excelente para que usted pueda conectarse con otros padres a través de grupo privado de Facebook – [Claremont Mckenna College Parents and Families](#).

College at Home: Encouraging and Supporting Our Students

By Ruchi Gulati P'22

The outbreak of COVID-19 has substantially influenced the lives of people across the globe. For safety reasons, colleges world-wide closed their campuses, forcing students to rely on virtual connections to create community, connect with classmates, and continue their academic courses. The unprecedented experience of "home quarantine," coupled with the uncertainty of academic and professional careers, can directly impact the mental and physical health of our students.



I connected with members of the Dean of Students Office (DOS) at CMC to discuss ways parents can encourage their students to maintain a full and healthy lifestyle at home. How can students feel connected to CMC and its community despite not being on campus? How can they stay engaged in a different time zone or in another country?

CMC is fortunate to have the expert advice and loving guidance from staff who are keeping the engines running. DOS staff Sean Rollolazo, assistant dean of students for academic success; Susan Layden, senior associate dean of students for academic success; and Jess Neilson, assistant dean for mental health and case management; were all happy to answer these pertinent questions for our community:

How can parents encourage students to lead healthy/balanced lifestyles?

DOS: Routines are critical to a student's well-being! During this time of unmet expectations (and the grief that comes with it), exercising control over small habits and being aware of how much time is dedicated to certain behaviors or tasks help strengthen emotional control, sustained attention, and other executive function skills.

As you explore the best approach with parenting your college student, understanding what structures they use to manage their time and what routines they gravitate toward will be helpful in encouraging them and keeping them accountable for their overall health. For some students, keeping consistent bed/wake times is the foundation of their health. For others, a 30-minute workout is what they need to decompress from tending to their responsibilities.

Family time, creative and artistic hobbies, counseling, outdoor activities, and nutritious cooking are all behaviors students lean into to grow and to widen their perspectives. Encourage your students as they continue to find time and habits that center creativity, coping skills, and holistic well-being.

What are some challenges parents should look out for when it comes to their students while they study virtually?

DOS: Some students may struggle with the sheer volume of the amount of time they need to spend at their phones, computers, and laptops (and most of us can certainly relate to the exhaustion that comes with so much screen time!). Having conversations with your student about managing screen time is essential. Talk to your student about scheduling time with a [Success Consultant](#). This group of students has had rigorous training around CMC's health and well-being framework, and they are terrific resources if your student is struggling with screen time.

Organizing time and materials for virtual learning may also present a challenge as it is a shift from the way students normally study. If you hear your student sharing concerns about this, please point them in our direction. The Academic Success professional staff would like to meet with them, and our Success Consultants are prepared to help with this transition. Breaks and time away from screens are incredibly important. If your student appears particularly room-bound and tied to their work, encourage breaks and time outdoors. Engage in as many non-screen family activities as possible. Virtual learning can feel isolating. Our faculty is working to connect with students through the classroom, and DOS is committed to the same engagement in co-curricular experiences. Encourage your student to join at least one out-of-class experience. We'd love it if it is a CMC experience, but it doesn't have to be. We have students engaged in political campaigns, volunteering in their communities, or working a few hours a week... anything that gets them connected to others and gives them a break from studying will help them return to their work with focus and energy.

What are some effective ways parents can encourage their students to reach out for academic or mental health support?

DOS: You can help your student by normalizing help-seeking behavior. If they are encountering a challenge with the remote experience, it's likely that someone else is experiencing something similar. Remind your students that this is a new time for us all. No question, no issue, is too small. Think about how you model help-seeking behavior in your own life. It is important to be as transparent as possible about this. Be sure to share how you seek help and collaborate with others.

If your student is not sure who to reach out to, encourage them to start with whomever they feel most comfortable. That might be a professor, coach, staff member, Success Consultant, [Resident Assistant \(RA\)](#), [First Year Guide \(FYG\)](#), or last year's roommate. One of the benefits of an intimate place like CMC is that our community is well connected, and individuals across campus regularly work with one another to support students.

Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with all the amazing resources available to your student. Think about those connector resources, like Success Consultants, RAs, and FYGs. When in doubt, suggest one of these as a point of contact as these groups have been trained to connect students to other supports.

What can parents do if their students are feeling disconnected from the CMC community?

DOS: Encourage your student to join social and extracurricular Zoom gatherings in a place they do not associate with class or coursework. Committing to at least one “fun” Zoom per week is a good habit to start.

Ask your student if they have checked out the Student Programming Calendar! Accessible through their CMC G-suite account, this calendar is the way to find student-run events that are open to the CMC student community. Instructions on how to use the calendar were recently emailed to all students in the Club Inform.

Our student clubs and organizations have been hard at work virtualizing their experiences to ensure that students around the world have access to a variety of events and activities. Encourage your student to keep an eye on their Gmail for the [ASCMC](#), [CPB](#) and Club Inform emails that land in their inbox each week. There are also some wonderful folks in DOS who have spent tons of time this summer creating new ways to stay connected. Devon MacIver, associate dean of student engagement, and MaryKate Jacobs, assistant director of student activities, are both available to talk with your student about ways to connect.

International students who could not make it back home must handle everything on their own. Does “growing up” too soon have a long-term impact on their psyche? How do we ensure they stay motivated?

DOS: College is a significant period for a young adult's development. Yes, the pandemic indeed presents new challenges for all of us. We do, however, want young adults to learn how to develop these essential life skills. This age, 18-25, is when these skills are supposed to emerge. Coping with stress, managing time, organizing tasks, and prioritizing are skills they strengthen every day during this pandemic. Help your student see this as an opportunity to develop skills that will only leverage their success in the future.

What online resources should parents know about?

DOS: Given that students are currently located across the world, [student support resources for fall 2020](#) have been expanded in order to reach as many students as possible.

Some highlights include:

- **7C.Health:** a new platform that provides 24/7 on-demand support for students who want to talk to with a health care professional for both medical or mental health reasons.
- **New therapist-led group discussions:** Often, students are not familiar with therapy and are unsure of how to access these services. Additionally, students may not be looking for formal therapy or mental health care, but would still like to talk with someone. Encourage students to reach out to Jess Neilson, our case manager, to chat about what sort of support systems might work for them.
- **Best Life Strategies Workshop:** This series began in early September and is designed to teach students how to maximize their lives right now to reach who they want to be and where they want to go. Workshop topics range from creating a personal framework and clarifying values to mindfulness practices and self-leadership concepts—all based in commitment to habits and behaviors that enhance well-being. Best Life workshops occur twice a week on Wednesdays (12:20-12:45 p.m. PDT and 4:00-4:25 p.m. PDT) through October 7.

With the advice from Sean, Susan, and Jess from DOS, parents can encourage students to lead healthier and holistic lives. CMC is ready to help your student with any problem they might face. While our community may be apart for a little while longer, we have the tools and a tight-knit community to overcome any distance.

Students on how the pandemic is presenting challenges and opportunities

I chatted with students all over the world and gathered what they were feeling at this time:

“The pandemic is tough! I am lucky that I am safe and well, but because I don’t have a permanent home, I’ve had to hop across California between 4 locations, since school closed. A huge shout out to my friends and CMC’s Senior Apartments for housing me, but it is difficult to focus on school and extracurriculars, as well as recruit for full time jobs when I have the constant question of figuring out where to live - weighing in on me,” Mimi Thompson ’21

“I am definitely not used to spending such concentrated amounts of time at home - conducting my academics, social life, sleep, etc., all in the same place- so this definitely impacted my emotional and mental well-being over the last few months. I felt less productive and motivated than usual but also was able to take time to focus on self-growth and dedicate more time than I thought to my internship and professional development this summer. I am really fortunate and grateful for living in Bangkok,

Thailand where we are coming up on to four months COVID-19 free so the practical side of things (like going to a cafe to study) has definitely improved!” Nandini Mittal ’22

“The pandemic has forced me to fly halfway across the world to attend classes on a screen while being in my house the entire time. But despite everything, I feel happy to be spending time with family and reflect on others going through much worse. I’ve used this time to appreciate my surroundings and convert the professional, practical, and mental challenges presented by the pandemic into lessons of gratefulness.” Kartikeya Aggarwal ’22

“This year has been nothing short of crazy. For me, these uncertain times have meant, amongst other things, that I haven’t been able to see my family in a year (who I cannot wait to see) and that school is entirely virtual. I miss the community interactions, the in-class, co-learning with my professors and peers. Whilst there are these harsh consequences of the pandemic, there is a lot of good to have come out of this time too. I have been able to explore and answer several curiosities. I have had the chance to give more time towards online community service through the foundation I work with, back in India. The most positive and successful interaction has been - recruiting my little niece and nephew into the Arsenal football camp.” Ary Gulati ’22

[Back to top](#)

Getting Fit at Home with CMS Recreation

CMS Recreation is a program that aims to provide quality recreational activities to the students, faculty, and staff of Claremont McKenna College, Harvey Mudd College, and Scripps College, as well as the rest of the Claremont Colleges community.



This fall, CMS Recreation is offering interactive classes via Zoom for all members of the CMC community. These classes include drop-in fitness classes, recreation and wellness offerings, intramurals, and some new remote-style weekly challenges. Start your Monday morning with restorative yoga, challenge yourself during Jungle Gym, or get a full body workout with CrossFit.

For a full list of classes and all programming information for the semester go to the [CMS Recreation website](#)

Make sure to follow CMS Recreation on social media for more information and a full list of fitness events.



Can you Offer a Micro-Internship to a CM Cer?

There is an exciting new way to recruit students and recent graduates to help you with any short-term project work that you or your organization may need. Micro-Internships are short-term, professional, paid projects which can be completed remotely.



Through Micro-Internships, not only can you offer your support to CMC students, but these talented students can also provide you with immediate support on professional tasks while they demonstrate their skills, explore career paths, and develop their professional networks. These paid opportunities typically require 5 to 40 hours of work by the student, and the projects are similar to those completed during a typical internship.

If you are able to help, please complete this [brief online form](#). The College has also partnered with Parker Dewey – the leading Micro-Internship network. Although [Parker Dewey](#) charges a modest fee, posting your opportunity to this network will open it to the entire Parker Dewey network, reaching students across multiple nationwide campuses. To post your opportunity on the Parker Dewey network, you can complete this [brief online form](#).

We hope you will consider offering these remote projects as an innovative way to support our students while also supporting your business needs.

Anne Sinek P'22
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CMC Soll Center for Student Opportunity: 909.607.7038
careersservices@cmc.edu

We Invite You to Get Involved!

CMC parents are an integral part of our community. Volunteering provides parents with the opportunity to stay in touch with campus community, meet friends and professors, and actively support the educational experience of students.

If you would like to become more actively involved, please go to the [Parent Volunteer Information](#) page to learn about the many opportunities available, including career services, admission, communications, events, and giving. You do not have to live locally to volunteer and support CMC and our amazing students!

[Back to top](#)



Parent Network Board Meetings

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