

How has the shift in your education in the past year due to COVID-19 helped you grow and learn more about yourself?

Due to my shift in education this past year, due to COVID-19, I've developed my interests as well as a more concrete idea of my values. I was able to learn about issues within my community and globally with the lightened schedule and workload of distance learning. It's funny to think about, but I spent a lot more time on my phone and social media, which contrary to popular belief, helped me develop my stance on social and political issues.

When Davis's two-week break turned from weeks to months, I realized the severity of the virus. I made sure to social distance, wear my mask, and protect others. My interest in politics sparked, not only because of the upcoming election, but I noticed how different politicians were reacting to handling COVID-19. I began researching and learning about how politics affected People of color, public health, and the flaws and corruption within our government. I began to focus more on social and political issues and developed my principles involving public health, helping the oppressed, gun control, reproductive rights, economic systems, etc. I now have more confidence in voicing my viewpoints and continue to research social and political issues.

My largest venture during the pandemic was creating my own small business to fight injustice. On July 22nd, I remember being bewildered by the number of sales my Etsy shop received. Suddenly, every few minutes I would hear a "cha-ching" notifying me of another order. Hours earlier, Merced Vu, a Tiktoker with 180K followers, posted a "back to school outfits" video which amassed over 440K likes. In her video, she wore a cropped tank-top from my nonprofit

Etsy shop fundraising for the Black Lives Matter Movement's efforts to reform the criminal justice system (which disproportionately harms black lives). The tank tops were an innovative incentive for teenage girls to donate money and to sport a product with a modern style. About a month prior to her post, I reached out to Merced and other influencers to promote my nonprofit, with little success. Her video helped instantly sell over 300 tops making this the largest project of my life. I was simultaneously overwhelmed and overjoyed at the success of my project. I quickly realized that I was unprepared for the hardest task- fulfilling hundreds of orders.

Staying up until two A.M. for days, I tried to process what seemed like a never-ending amount of orders. I felt an intense amount of pressure to complete orders although, in hindsight, most of it was self-inflicted. Every mistake was costly. Every time my embroidery machine jammed, I'd wince from knowing I had lost precious materials, time, and money. When I was careless or lacked attention to detail, I lost money. Every time I made a mistake, I despaired. It took many mistakes for me to become proficient and efficient. By the third week of trying to complete orders, I was only about halfway done, and new orders were still trickling in. Customers would often inquire about their orders, claiming my processing time stated it would take 3-5 business days to process from the purchasing date. Their inquiries only added to the pressure. I had the suffocating feeling that I was disappointing my clients. My mom suggested I message everyone who was waiting for an order, to tell them about the immense amount of orders I was processing. My mom even offered to help me. For days I told her it would be too much of a hassle and take too long, but I eventually gave in and decided to message everyone and be very honest about my struggle to complete orders and how I was very thankful for their business. An immense weight was lifted off my shoulders after an overwhelming amount of positive responses came back. I

believed I had to diligently and silently suffer when in reality, it was worth the time to contact people before they contacted me.

To my dismay, I received a couple of four-star reviews which eventually led me to accept and understand that people will not always react in the manner I desire. I poured my heart and soul into the project and executed running a business to the best of my ability which were the only aspects I could truly control. After completing orders, I was able to directly donate \$5,000 worth of profits to the California Innocence Project, an organization dedicated to freeing the wrongly incarcerated. Going viral amplifies my determination to push my boundaries as a businesswoman through education, perseverance, and growth.

Although I had previous business ventures, the success of my shirt business made me realize that I wanted to pursue a career in the field. I was accepted into my dream school, the University of Southern California, as a fall admit to their business administration program. I'm looking forward to furthering my education and utilizing career opportunities at USC.

Thanks to COVID-19 I was able to develop my moral beliefs and utilize business to support my values. I'm grateful to be able to grow and educate myself despite the challenges of COVID. I'm super excited to attend USC in the fall and study business administration. I'll always value how COVID-19 allowed me to focus on contributing to fighting injustice as well as aiding my personal growth through education.