

Date: December 1, 2020

Subject: Effects of COVID-19

Interviewee: Paige Madison Thing

Interviewer: Benjamin Robert Drake

Place of Interview: Zoom

Drake: In your own words, what is your role on campus?

Thing: I am a student leader, I am Secretary of Thomas Hall's Hall Council, and I am a Freshman living on-campus.

Drake: And Thomas Hall is a Residence Hall, correct?

Thing: Correct.

Drake: How do you think COVID-19 has impacted campus?

Thing: I think it's impacted campus greatly. This is my first year at Eastern, so I don't know any different, but from what I've heard, everything is different. There's (*sic*) normally events that are going on with large amounts of people and the dorms. I know that I would normally get a roommate. I have my own room this year, and I can't imagine it any other way because I'm a freshman.

Drake: Going to pause really quickly now. (*Pauses Recording, then resumes*) What do you think the role of masks and social distancing is in limiting the spread of the virus?

Thing: I think that it has helped the campus stay open as long as it did. I think that it has helped us keep the spread down and even though it's inconvenient for the students and everything else, I think they enforced it well, I think that masks are worn widely throughout campus. And social distancing I think has helped a lot.

Drake: What has been the biggest challenge to you, personally, over the course of the pandemic?

Thing: For me, it's probably the online component of classes and how small they've had to become, with some of my classes normally supposed to meeting four times a week as opposed to now being two times a week and on zoom. It has hindered my education experience, but I think it has greatly impacted it and made it a little more difficult. I do have to work a little bit harder and I think that is probably the hardest part.

Drake: Something that I've heard other people talk about is Zoom fatigue, have you yourself experienced Zoom fatigue because of online classes/

Thing: I am fortunate enough that I don't have any classes that are specifically on Zoom, during the semester, but since we've gone remote and I've decided to stay home, Zoom fatigue hasn't really affected me, yet. I assume that at the end of the semester being on Zoom for multiple hours a day, I assume it will affect me then.

Drake: What do you think the biggest change for you, over the course of the Pandemic, has been?

Thing: The biggest change for me is the amount of people I'm allowed to hang out with at a time and just the amount of people that are around me at all times. I am an extrovert, I love to make friends, and I found that it's been a little bit harder to meet people, because you want to limit the amount of people that you're around, the amount of people that will have to be contact traced potentially in the future. So, I feel like my social circle is a lot smaller that it could be.

Drake: Us extroverts are really struggling, let me tell you. Over the course of the pandemic the University has put in multiple policies: masks, social distancing, how the dining halls work. How do you feel about them, for example, do you think that they help, do you think they keep you safe?

Thing: I think that they definitely help, they definitely keep us safe. I agree with every decision that they have made so far, about shutting down campus and the dining hall restrictions and everything like that. I think that without those restrictions we wouldn't have stayed open for the 12 weeks that we did and without those restrictions there would be a lot more cases.

Drake: Following up with that, do you think that they're too extreme or not extreme enough or do you think they are just right in the middle of where they need to be?

Thing: I think that the restrictions could help in other places, I'm not sure how shutting down the dining halls, eating centers, is helping stop the spread of COVID, since you're confining yourself to only 3, 4 people that you're eating with as opposed to the people that were doing off-campus activities, or large on-campus activities. I feel like restrictions could've been a little stricter in those areas as opposed to some of the areas they were implemented in.

Drake: Cool. You probably won't know the answer to this because of you being a freshman, but how do you think that your organization has changed because of the Pandemic?

Thing: My organization meaning?

Drake: Thomas Hall Council.

Thing: Gotcha. I think it has definitely changed. From someone who was also on the council, she is a sophomore, she has said that the events have changed so much, and I know that programming is not as easy as it used to be, not a lot of people come out for programs as much as they used to and it's been a lot harder for us to come up with programs, come up with events for the entire hall to do because we literally cannot allow the entire hall to come to events and I know that with our executive board meetings that we do every week, we have to sit social distanced, we have to take COVID into account for literally every decision we make.

Drake: Now you specifically, we talked about your organization as a whole, but as a member of your organization, how has your role specifically changed over the Pandemic?

Thing: With this being my first year, I obviously can't say a lot but I do think that, I would be a lot busier if everything was back to normal, if there was no pandemic. I think I would have a lot more duties. As secretary, I just keep notes during our meetings and I wrote something on a bulletin board once, so without the pandemic my duties would be more extensive.

Drake: *(Pauses recording, then resumes)* Now moving into the realm of University Housing and Dining. They've also implemented policies like the University has as a whole, single-person occupancy, an example of that. Do you think that is a good thing that they did that, do you think that it really doesn't do much, what do you think?

Thing: I think that the single person occupancy didn't do as much as they think it would've because it just made it harder for us to make friends and made it easier

for us to feel isolated. The Pandemic already made us feel isolated, harder to get out and see people we love and everything, so being in a room by ourselves, I'm not sure how that made it better.

Drake: Cool. Sticking with that same road. Do you know where University Housing and Dining sends students that need to be quarantined?

Thing: Yes. If a student is exposed or they are tested positive for COVID-19, I know they are housed in the University Apartments on-campus.

Drake: Yes. Correct. How do you feel about that situation about them being transported to University Apartments?

Thing: I, personally, was not quarantined on-campus, but I did have friends that were, so I had to pick one up. So, I did see the inside of the apartments and everything, and I think the fact that they were transported is a great idea because of the communal bathrooms and it's just limiting exposure, and I think that it's a great idea that they did that, the apartments, however, I know that, they're very small, probably not as nice as they could've been, but I think that the entire idea was well thought out.

Drake: Moving out of University Housing and Dining sphere and moving into you as a freshman. Obviously, this year has been rough for you as a recent high school graduate. How do you think that COVID-19 has impacted your first year here?

Thing: I think it's impacted almost everything. I have no idea what a normal college experience is like. I have heard about it from upperclassmen and so next year, if a vaccine is created, if everything goes back to "normal," it'll be extremely weird for me because that's not my normal college experience. So, everything, frankly.

Drake: That's fair. Speaking of a normal college year, one thing that a lot of Freshman go through is having to adapt to college culture versus high school culture, given COVID-19, it's probably a lot harder for you, talk about your experience with adapting to the changes.

Thing: Moving away from home is hard enough, and with the world being a scary and dangerous place in a pandemic, it is a lot harder to make the decision to move away from home and me being based in Springfield, so that was only about an hour and a half away from EIU [*Eastern Illinois University*] it was still hard. It made the transition harder because I had a limited number of people that could help me move in; and the first few days being on campus you make friends, you find your classes you do all of that, and it was a lot harder to make friends do to everything, and I felt disconnected from the rest of campus, at least for the first few weeks.

Drake: Right now, in this moment how are you feeling as a college freshman?

Thing: I feel like I'm in a great position as a college freshman. My classes this whole semester have been great, my teachers have been great, transitioning going on to online, my teachers have done a great job of making sure everything is clear making sure that we're all in good spots. I feel good.

Drake: Is there anything else you think would be important to put on the record or anything else you'd like to say in general, about the project, about COVID-19, about Eastern?

Thing: EIU is still a great place to be, even during a Pandemic, I've still had a great first semester of college, I've loved it, I can't wait to go back in January, and even

though I bet other people have struggled, being on-campus during the semester I haven't. I love it there and EIU is still a great place to be, even during Coronavirus.

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Interview Terminated