

Hello, Friend,

Greetings from Valparaiso University! All across the world, 2020 has been brought changes and challenges not seen in recent history. Valpo has been busy tackling these issues just as you have, wherever you may currently be. As we move through Summer and into a new school year with the Fall 2020 semester, we want you to know that our international alumni are on our minds, and we hope & pray that you are well and safe.

Below, take a look at highlights of some pre-March activities, stories from international students during shutdowns, and ways to stay connected to Valpo, including opportunities to get involved in Virtual Homecoming 2020!

[-The Office of International Programs](#)

Early Spring 2020 Activities

Before the worldwide shutdowns in March, the Spring 2020 semester was full of new beginnings and fun activities. Check out the pictures below from January's New International Student Orientation and February's Ski Trip and World Banquet!



Stories of Shutdown

When Valpo Spring Break started on February 29, certain parts of the world had been affected by COVID-19, but to that point, the U.S. had not yet seen a significant & visible impact, and international travel was largely open. When Spring Break ended on March 15, the U.S., Europe, Asia, and many other parts of the world had shut down virtually all international travel due to the rapidly spreading disease, and all schools in the U.S. were preparing to move instruction online.

Take a minute to read 3 first-hand accounts of how the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic has affected Valpo students from 3 different countries.



Michael Hazboun, Jordan

My parents and I had decided that I'd return back home during this spring break. The first week and a half were pretty calm, but then my government said that they were going to close the borders! By then I had already had my tickets booked for March 15th, that time was very stressful because we had a lot more unknowns than knowns. In the end I decided to stay here since classes were announced to be online for at least another month, which now has turned in to 5 months.

I kept taking my classes online with a sleep schedule worse than anyone should have due to the 8 hour time difference, but most things went well. I attended all of my classes, watched all of my pre-recorded lectures and everything was as good as it could be. The only things that were difficult for me were planning projects and finding a way to move out my things from my dorm; my roommate was a literal life saver in the end in helping with that!

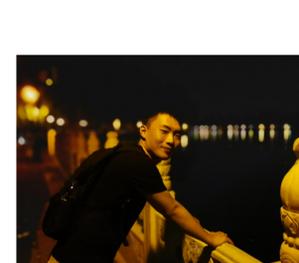
During the summer break the virus didn't really have that major of an affect on my life since almost all of the cases we've had here were found at the border. Also, face masks are really annoying, especially to anyone who wears glasses! But right now, me and my family are just stressed with how I'm going to return to the U.S. for classes in August since our airports are still closed with no signs of opening them to the U.S.



Sai Sahana Kacham, India

I travelled to India in March for vacation during Spring Break, planning to return to the U.S. in a few weeks. But due to COVID-19 there was a travel ban in India, and all the international flights were stopped to control the situation. I was planning to graduate in May and had a valid I-20 until May 12th, so I had to return back at least by then to maintain my status and be eligible for OPT.

As the situation was getting worse every day, there was no proper information about the travel ban. Then the Indian government introduced a scheme called VANDE BHARAT MISSION to help all the indians who got stuck in different parts of the world. They had a few flights which traveled to US as well. These flights were filled with the passengers who got stuck in India. I wasn't able to book my flight until mid-May after my I-20 got expired, so it was a risk to travel with the old I-20. However, I applied for a new OPT I-20 which has a validity of 60 days, and I carried all the required documents that justifies my trip to India. I flew back to US by the end of May, and though I had to face a few difficulties during port of entry, as I had all the valid documents, I cleared the immigration and was allowed to re-enter to apply for OPT.



Qi Li, China

I'm a current graduate student and live in Valparaiso off-campus. During the first several weeks of March, I felt very scared because of the news from China at that period was all talking about the seriousness of COVID-19, but I barely saw people wear masks here. So, at that time, my roommate and I bought a bunch of food, enough to last us a month. At that time, I wore protective goggles, N95 masks, and hand gloves whenever I went out. That was the most boring time of my life! It was like we were falling into the "black hole of time", and it felt like time was going by quickly, although every day we did nothing.

As the CDC stats showed that COVID-19 is not so fatal to young people, I began to feel less nervous about it, and just wore a mask when I went outside. Now, Indiana requires everyone to wear masks and some other rules like that. It makes me feel relieved that as long as everyone wears a mask and rubs their eyes, which will help us not to catch the virus. Now, I go out almost normally like before, and some nights I drive to the beach with friends to look at the stars, and life seems to go back to normal, except we need to wear masks every time we go out.

Virtual Homecoming & Staying Connected

[Virtual Homecoming Fall 2020](#)

Though in-person homecoming events in Fall 2020 have been canceled due to the pandemic, the good news is many of you can participate more than ever in the Virtual 2020 Valpo Homecoming in September and October!

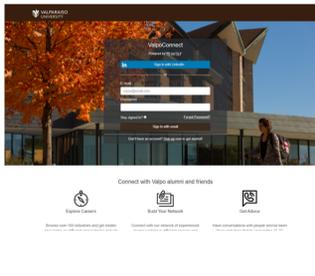
In particular, we are planning a couple of Zoom panel alumni-specific events which will most likely take the form of a Zoom panel where international alumni share their time at Valpo and how they got to where they are now.

If you would like to be one of the panelists/presenters at one of these events, please contact Andrew Knox <andrew.knox@valpo.edu> by August 17th.

Of course, we hope all of you can sign on and join! Zoom links for the events will be sent out within the next couple of months.

Other Ways to Stay Connected!

ValpoConnect: Click on the picture below to go directly to the ValpoConnect login page.



International Alumni Stories: We'd love to hear where you are now! Click below to share.



LinkedIn Page: Our International Alumni page has nearly 600 connections. Click below to become one of them today!

