

Oklahoma City Friday

Stepping out of comfort join for an OSSM educational experience

When you are growing up everyone tells you that the hardest year of your high school career will be your junior year.

From standardized tests to juggling AP classes, 11th grade is one of the most formative years of your life, prepping you for the future. Having known



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OSSM NOTEBOOK

from the young age of 10-years-old that I would apply to the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathe-

matics, I knew this to be true. What I, and I don't believe anyone else could anticipate, would be that my junior year would be during a pandemic.

My first semester at OSSM was completely online and despite the increased workload and difficult coursework, not much in my personal life had

changed. I woke up in my own bed surrounded by the walls that had housed me for 17 years. I went to virtual school at my mahogany desk only a foot from my bed.

Once the school day finished, I could simply close my laptop and be back into the comfort of my home; but of course this is not what OSSM is

intended to be. OSSM is such an advanced and acclaimed school purely because you are truly and fully immersed in the academic environment. I was experiencing a watered-down imitation of this experience.

As the first semester drew to a close and we went into winter break there were murmurs of school starting once again in-person and on-campus. To say I was terrified was an understatement. I had grown comfortable and complacent in virtual school. Going onto campus promised difficulty, stress and perhaps worst of all, loneliness.

The only way we as a school could keep our community safe

was to social distance -- social distance from the rest of the world. Once we stepped through the front gates we were not permitted to leave until either the end of the semester or when the cases in Oklahoma reduced. This meant weeks and weeks on end of not being able to return home or see my family.

As the move-in date crept closer and closer, I could feel my brain shut down. I used to live months, years ahead, forever planning and preparing for my future, but now I savored every second, fearing the future, knowing that I could not predict nor know how my future would be at OSSM. I was so afraid.

The first day, standing alone in my near-empty dorm room, surrounded by haphazardly strewn boxes and clothes, my parents pulling out of the parking lot and driving away, was one of the scariest moments of my life. I felt so alone.

What if I wasn't good enough? What if I failed? More than

anything, I wanted to go back home. It was a fear and sadness that ate painfully at my heart, burrowing deep inside me. Everyone else felt so comfortable in their skin, so why wasn't I?

As the days passed though, my fears ebbed. I made friends. I went to classes and things weren't quite so scary. I had left my family back in Stillwater, but I met a new family.

My roommate, my roommates and my classmates were just like me. A little scared, nervous, but eager to make our own place in the world. This was a school that fostered leaders. It was why we had all come to OSSM, and it would be what bonds us all when we are long gone from this campus.

The last year was terrifying, the not-knowing, the losses and sacrifices we all made, but we made it through together. I may not know what my future will be here at OSSM, but I'm starting to think it will be wonderful.

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