

# A Reflection on Returning to College in a Pandemic

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**A**ugust 22, 2020: My family has arrived at Hampden-Sydney. Time to start my Sophomore year of College. It is a strange feeling, returning during a pandemic. The parking lot was full, with only one spot open when we arrived. It was comforting to see this, as it made me feel like we were returning back to normal. I want to be here, and I have every intention of giving my all, but I still feel nervous about doing this. What if I get sick? What would I do? Would I survive? This, on top of normal college worries is stressful. I think my mom feels that way too, as half of what we brought are extra cleaning supplies and related gear. It is strange, that despite these uncertain times, moving into the dorms was practically the same as last year. The only difference was that now I had to wear a face mask.

That is what stands out to me the most, not what my mom said, not the weather, or even the situation. It was how normal everything was. How it felt as if nothing was happening. It was quiet and peaceful, almost like I was the only living thing in the building. It was both comforting and disturbing as it represents how uncertain everyone is regarding the virus.

Perhaps the best representation of how I feel is the bottle of hand sanitizer that Hampden-Sydney gave me. It is small and insignificant, something that we took for granted not even a year ago. It represents the new changes made this year, and yet how things are still the same, as it is so common that it would not look out of place in a dorm room before the pandemic. It is subtle, a hint at the change in atmosphere that is just out of sight, hidden by a feeling of familiarity. A change that isn't noticeable unless you actively look. That is how I felt when I first returned to Hampden-Sydney.