

Domestic, international students react to early move-out

Sami Mirza, Features Editor | December 16, 2020



After three months on campus, those who elected to study in-person this semester have completed their semester off campus through remote learning. Students who took in-person courses were required to move all of their belongings out by Nov. 21, though students could stay on campus for additional cost through the end of the semester on Dec. 11.

Mohammed Mansour, '24, found the decision to prevent parents from helping their students move out annoying yet understandable.

"I didn't hear any real complaints about anything except (parents not being allowed in rooms)," Mansour said. "Obviously, (due to COVID-19) we're not going to have our folks come into our rooms and stuff, but that was the only frustration and it was a small one, from what I understand. It was a pretty smooth experience for most people."

Nicholas Woronchuck, '21, head resident assistant of Schultz Hall and a senator for the Class of 2021, also thought the transition was smooth.

"For me personally, it hasn't been too bad," Woronchuck said. "I haven't heard any horror stories or anything like that. Just subtleties of it, people are like, 'Oh I wish this, I wish that,' but nothing really concrete in any way."

Dec. 11 was the final day for international students to remain on campus; after this date students must vacate their rooms and remove all their belongings. Angel Astaría, '22, an international student from Indonesia, said that the requirement to remove all belongings was not popular among international students.

"The biggest thing that people have been displeased about was the storage," Astaría said. "Especially if people are staying for (the period from November 22 to December 11) and



Module 1 (of the spring semester), we don't get why we have to pack everything and then move in again in 4 weeks. The Module 1 online class, there have been mixed feelings about that with international students because if they go home, they have to come back because they don't want the time difference to hinder their schedule."

Astaria noted that the college was also charging international students to remain on campus during these periods.

"They never used to charge us international students to live on campus for semester breaks," Astaria said. "But now they've charged us 500 extra dollars to live on campus for the two weeks that we're staying here. All the students who stayed here think it's an excessive amount because we don't eat for \$500."

Astaria also said that the food provided by the school was only available for a few hours each day, which was inconvenient for some.

"I (haven't gone) to Kinz once, which (was) the only dining hall open," Astaria said. "It (was) only open from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.. A lot of students have been complaining that the time window has just been too small because they either have class or they don't wake up at the time. If you don't go (during) that window, you basically have no food because they serve breakfast, lunch and dinner during that time."

While some international students, like Astaria, are staying in the United States to avoid time differences, others simply took a break during this past semester.

"I know some people who have taken incompletes because of the time difference, because they couldn't get their work in on time," Astaria said. "I know my close friend, he's not coming back and he's not taking online classes at all and just took a break from school because he couldn't handle the toll the semester had between having online class and in-person class.

Mai Nguyen Dac, '23, from Vietnam, noted that the current COVID-19 pandemic also complicates returning home.

"I would love to go back home," Nguyen Dac said. "The problem is, the number of cases of coronavirus in America is (so high), my country decided to cancel all the flights in and out of America to my country, so there's no way for me to go back home. I also don't have any relatives in here so I have to ask the school for a lot of support for me during this winter break."

Nguyen Dac also cited storing her belongings as an issue this break.

"I am planning to stay with my friend, so I cannot bring all of the stuff with me," Nguyen Dac said. "It's also a pretty hard thing to do — to move all the stuff out to storage. It's harder for international students (because) we don't have a car here, we don't have a license that's valid here, all the stuff like that."

Woronchuck noted that storage was something that even local students had worried about.

“I’ve had ASG meetings about this and we discussed this in our all-staff meeting with Residence Life — the transportation of items to storage facilities, trying to work that out logistically with classes going on,” Woronchuck said. “During that meeting, I volunteered, and three other people volunteered to drive people to storage facilities with the Gator vans. I think the school could have been a little better about that with helping students out a little bit more ... With helping people move their stuff to storage facilities and whatnot I think it went a little bit easier and I think as a result, I haven’t heard any horror stories whatsoever.”

Woronchuck also cited a November General Assembly meeting, during which a student challenged the administration on the move out date.

“I remember there was a handful of individuals who didn’t go about articulating their thoughts on the situation very well and it came across as somewhat rude,” Woronchuck said. “They really had resentment towards the logistics of how the school was planning the move out ... it’s not for me to say whether it was valid complaints or invalid complaints.”

He said that from what he’s seen, such complaints of a rough process were not reflected across the student body. “I think it was isolated, if at all,” Woronchuck said.

Academically, however, the transition was not as easy for some. Mansour said that for him, being at home isn’t as helpful as being at Allegheny.

“I don’t know what it is about being at Allegheny, but being in a college setting I guess makes me feel significantly more productive,” Mansour said. “When I’m at home for what was essentially break — like Thanksgiving break and now we’re technically back in school — it felt like, ‘Oh, I’m at home, it’s time to relax.’ But that’s not true. I still have class, I have work. Being at Allegheny, being on campus, made it a lot easier to self-start and start getting things done.”

Nguyen Dac, who is also an RA in Brooks Hall, said that for her residents the workload this semester was just as heavy, or heavier.

“It’s pretty stressful, because my residents are already upperclassmen, so they have no problem feeling lonely and feeling isolated and stuff like that, but they really did have a hard time with studying materials and finishing up all the assignments,” Nguyen Dac said. “They all say that they expect their GPA to go (down) this semester just because of that.”

Mansour, however, said his workload after Thanksgiving break felt lighter than usual.

“I don’t really know what it is,” Mansour said. “I’m not going to speculate. But it’s the tail end of the semester anyway. Most of what we’re doing is finals prep, or final projects, and a lot of that is studying on your own. Doing research on your own. It’s not a lot of work that the professors are putting on us.”

Woronchuck thinks the college handled the pandemic well.

“I can’t complain, and if I could complain, there’s nobody really I could complain to,” Woronchuck said. “I’m not saying it was perfect or it was an enjoyable experience, for every single individual who attended classes online. I can’t speak to the people who were in quarantine, because I was fortunate enough to remain out of quarantine. Overall I think they did the best that they could with what they had at that time”

Nguyen Dac thought that the college contained the virus effectively

“Compared to what the government is doing, our school actually did a pretty good job in contact tracing, in trying to prevent students from going in and out and stuff like that,” Nguyen Dac said. “I think they can go stricter on that, but I know that the students here would not want something like that. Here people value freedom a lot and they don’t want to be put under control by any authority figure at all.”

Out of a total on-campus enrollment of 1,667 students, 43 cases were reported this semester at Allegheny, according to data provided by the college, meaning just under 1 in 39 students tested positive. This, compared with a rate of 1 case in 29 people in Pennsylvania and an estimated 1 in 20 nationwide.

Mansour is slightly apprehensive about returning in January.

“The way I work is after not doing anything for too long, I’m going to start to get bored and I feel like I can jump into stuff more quickly, but I’m pretty sure I’m going to burn out after the first week or two, which sucks looking forward,” Mansour said. “But it is what it is. There’s not much you can do with it except go with it.”

Woronchuck, however, is hopeful that the college will make adjustments moving forward into the spring semester.

“I like to think that they’re going to learn from what went well or what didn’t go well this semester and they’ll implement improvements here (and) there, where it is needed,” Woronchuck said.

About the Writer



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Sami Mirza is a freshman from South Bend, IN. He intends to major in Communication Arts and double minor in Spanish and Arabic. Though this is his first...

1 Comment

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- Faraway Student on December 20th, 2020 2:36 am



Move out might have been mildly frustrating but fine for nearby domestic students, but Allegheny keeps letting down and creating logistical and often financial nightmares time after time for international and faraway students during COVID. All of their COVID planning seems to revolve around middle class and wealthy white students and their helicopter parents in the greater Pittsburgh suburban area, probably because that is who their donors are, while any effort to fulfill their so-called global outreach goes out the window when it isn't convenient for the administration. I know that planning during COVID is not easy but many other private colleges are much more accommodating to the needs of students who live faraway. We're not asking for a ton, but would like to simply be able to attain our education on campus as we had planned for this time of our lives and the administrators said would still be feasible without having to pay thousands of dollars extra for staying on campus when we're normally able to be there without fees, carefully planned plane trips and hotel stays to only arrive on campus for an unflexibly scheduled move-in time, and storage between semesters for a place we will be coming back to in weeks.

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