

## **Mark Kuperman Expectations vs. Reality Reflection Essay**

When I was in high school and I heard people talking about college I would always experience a mix of anticipation, excitement, and anxiety. I knew I would enjoy the freedom and the ability to choose what classes to take was very appealing, but at the same time I had heard so many people tell me that college is no joke. And while the freedom was going to be great it also meant that I had to be much more responsible. With my senior year of high school ending abruptly, I felt I wasn't prepared for college and my anxiety about the difficulty of the classes and the newfound responsibilities I would have began to grow.

When the time to start my classes finally came, I was both relieved and upset. With the COVID-19 pandemic raging on it made no sense to be on campus and I cancelled my housing plan. So, while I was relieved that I would have my parents and some of my high school friends around to keep life similar to last year, I was also very upset to not get the college experience. As the classes started, I had many concerns: what would my professors be like, how much time would I need to spend studying, how do I compare to other students? However, I quickly realized that my anxiety was not necessary. The first week of classes was surprisingly easy and reminded me of my high school classes. Sure, there were some differences like more strict deadlines and different grading, but overall, I could deal with this. As the semester continued, I realized that college classes were in fact harder than high school, but if I did my work ahead of time and stayed organized there was nothing to worry about. My chemistry and math classes were difficult, but the professors were good at lecturing and if I had questions my TA's were great resources to help. I found that if I attended all the lectures and did the assignments I was given, I would be able to get decent if not good grades in these classes. My other classes, engineering and a history class about the crusades were extremely interesting and I found myself spending more time than I needed to working on things related to those classes. As the semester progressed, I realized that I needed to find a topic from each class that interested me. If I could focus on that aspect of the class, I would be able to study much more effectively and I would do well on exams and get good grades.

My final class was CPSG 100. When I first signed up for this course, I believed that we would focus only on the science of global change throughout the entire 2-year program. However, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about many interesting topics such as how our own mind may be tricking us and logical fallacies that may help us become better debaters. I was also surprised about some of the topics that we didn't manage to cover this semester. For example, we didn't learn much about how we could slow down global warming and what kind of technologies were being developed to help better the environment. While I was slightly upset about not covering such topics, I understand that I will have several semesters to learn about such things and look forward to the future. I also hope to be able to do an in-person excursion with the rest of the class one day. The excursion I did over zoom was interesting, but its so much harder to learn

about a project when you don't see how it works and I was slightly upset that I missed out on the annual trip.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic changed some of my plans for this year, I still have enjoyed life as a University student outside of classes. Several of my friends from high school are also taking classes online so I have people that I can meet with outside of class and it is nice to have a car to drive around. While in high school I did imagine myself spending a lot of time with friends when I was in college, I could have never predicted how much time I spend at home. While I am upset about having to live at home instead of being in the dorms with other people my age, I am happy to not have to share a bathroom with an entire floor as I imagined I would when I was still in high school. Overall, my life is pretty different than I imagined but it comes with both pros and cons.

Overall, even though things are very different than I expected them to be, I have tried to focus on the positive differences which has helped me get more excited for next year. I have realized that if I focus on the positive aspects of my situation, I will enjoy myself more and I will be more successful overall. I would advise any new students coming to the SGC program to not worry so much. Everyone that comes into college has some anxiety coming in, yet the large majority of students make it through. As long as you put in the effort for your classes you will make it through just fine.