

Week 3: Let's Go Tyler!

Hey, fellow Tar Heels. How has week 3 been treating you?

As we finish up week three of online learning, I'm struck by the fact that I've settled into a legitimate routine. There are things about this new way of life that have begun to feel almost normal - there's coffee waiting for me in the kitchen on my days with morning classes, for example, and I look forward to walking my dog every afternoon. This routine is nothing like the ones I'd grown so used to over four years at UNC, but it's kind of comforting to have some stability in this unstable environment.

One thing I've been doing with my family every night is watching the Jeopardy! College Tournament. What began as a desperate attempt to simulate the feeling of watching college sports has become an actual event for my family - we put on jerseys, place friendly bets on which student will win the game, and try to guess the answers to the trivia questions ourselves. When faced with a British Literature category, I found myself attempting to show off everything I've learned from four years of studying English at UNC to my parents - almost a more difficult challenge than reading eighteenth century poetry!

The best part of my new routine, though, is definitely Friday night Zoom meetings with my friends. With the help of a group text, zoom, and the handy virtual backgrounds feature, my friends and I can meet up and virtually travel wherever we want to meet - usually, this means places on Franklin Street. I have missed my friends with an almost physical ache since leaving campus last month, but getting to see them - and their siblings, and their pets! - every week through the power of the internet helps me feel connected to them.

Zoom meetings are not the same as meeting with my friends in person - we can't break into smaller conversations, we can't touch each other, and sometimes the video lags or microphones fade out. But there's something about seeing them, and knowing that they miss me like I miss them, that helps me feel stronger, more capable of facing another day, another week. My friends and I were all destined to go our separate ways at the end of the semester - now we're apart sooner than any of us wanted, but we're still together. Maybe our commitment to speaking with each other, checking in, and making time for each other every week will be a routine that outlasts this lockdown, helping us to stay connected to each other and to our UNC experience as we begin our post-college lives.

These past few weeks have been tough, but they've also shown me how strong the UNC community is. All over, I see students reaching out to each other, reminding each other that UNC is more than a physical place. Through cheering on college

students on Jeopardy, talking with my classmates about our assignments, and especially by spending quality time with my friends, I'm helping to keep Carolina in my mind, as I settle into these new routines at home.

See y'all next week, and let's go Tyler, my pick to win it all on Jeopardy!

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