

Transcript of Interview with Trisha Howes by Annie Schaller

Interviewee: Trisha Howes

Interviewer: Annie Schaller

Date: 09/18/2020

Location (Interviewee): Boston, Massachusetts

Location (Interviewer): Boston, Massachusetts

Transcriber: Clinton Roberts

Abstract: [curator] Annie (Anna) Schaller interviews Trisha Howes and asks her about campus closing at Northeastern University. Howes also speaks about her job going to remote and what it was like to be a virtual intern. [from item description] This is an interview with a Northeastern Student, Trisha Howes as part of our HIST 1215 class.

Annie Schaller 0:04

This is an interview for the COVID-19 Archive Project. It is Friday, September 18 at 10 o'clock in the morning, and I am Annie Schaller. I am interviewing Trisha Howes, a third-year biochemistry student at Northeastern. She was living in Boston during the pandemic while moving back and forth from her parents' house in Weymouth, Mass to her apartment in Boston. She lived with her mother, her brother and her dog. And she was working on co-op when the pandemic hits. Trisha, do you consent to be interviewed for this project?

Trisha Howes 0:51

I do. Yes.

Annie Schaller 0:55

This interview is taking place remotely. But both the interviewer and the interviewee are in Boston. So I know you spent a lot of your time in different places in Boston or Weymouth, Mass during the pandemic? Which place do you- would you say you felt most safe or comfortable?

Trisha Howes 1:18

Um, so I think those are two wildly varying things for me personally, um, I think it- I think safety calls into like, how I think of it is like, physically like, am I physically safe here? And then comfortable. I think for me, it's more of like a mental thing. Um, so physically, I did feel more safe in Weymouth, just because I had more space at my mom's, um, I did have like my car there. And I was able to kind of socially dist- socially distance myself more there just because I have like less interactions with people outside of my kind of, like, quarantine bubble. And then, in terms of comfort, I did feel more comfortable in Boston, solely because I was very used to like, living on my own and cooking myself dinner and just kind of having that independence. Um, and like, that degree of self-sufficiency, which kind of dwindled while I was- while I was at my mom's. Um, so I think it was kind of a hard draw for me traveling back and forth between my apartment and my mom's because I did have like, the physical security at my mom's, but I kind of had the mental security at my apartment in Boston.

Annie Schaller 2:53

Yeah, for sure. That makes total sense. Um, so more on that vein, you- you mentioned you travel back and forth between your mom's and Boston, and what are the other sort of changes to your daily or weekly routine that that you feel most affected you.

Trisha Howes 3:13

Um, so I was on co-op while- when the pandemic first kind of hit, I was actually working in biotech, which is where Corona COVID-19 first made it- which is how Corona COVID-19 first made its way into Boston. So my company's response was like quite swift, because they were very worried, understandably, and rightfully so. So I actually started work from home long before any of people that I knew who were on co-op did as well. Which was obviously a big lifestyle change, it changed- it switched from me waking up at like, 6, 6:30 in the morning and having to be in Cambridge by like, eight o'clock, 8:30 to me rolling out of bed and not turning my camera on and go and shoot my morning meetings. Which obviously at first, it was nice, because I didn't have to like, get ready. And I didn't have to take the tea and all that. But after a while, like morale started to run low as well as like, I don't know, just kind of like any like, motivation, I guess. Although my company did do really well with like, making sure that we all still felt comfortable and we all still felt like we were doing something important like, especially as interns because my job was mainly in a lab. So that quickly switched over to like, data analytics and all this kind of stuff, which was definitely interesting, and I don't think I would have had that opportunity if we had not gone remote. Um, and then obviously I work well actually not, obviously I'm sorry, I also worked at Anthropologie on Newbury Street when this all started, um, and they went- went- they put us on furlough a little after my co-op started remote. So that was obviously really sad because I like did have something to go to when this all started and then when they close down, I had nothing to go to. Um, so it was definitely like a big, big lifestyle change because all my friends had left city most of them were in dorms, so they were all gone. And that was kind of hard to deal with at first.

Annie Schaller 5:46

And so, you mentioned that you went remote on your with your co-op before a lot of your friends. What was the message and the jus- sort of justification? Obviously you work for the company that sort of brought the Coronavirus in a way to Boston. But was there any- any more justification or were you sort of like this is way too cautious of them or, or what were your thoughts?

Trisha Howes 6:12

Sorry, I think I misspoke. So, biotech was the industry that brought Coronavirus into Boston. It wasn't my company. I don't actually remember which company it was.

Annie Schaller 6:24

I think it was Biogen, right?

Trisha Howes 6:25

Biogen Yes, um, which actually, we were working in partnership with them on projects. Um, so it was like really close to home. The CEO of my company has always been like super rigorous about making sure that employees are safe, comfortable, all that stuff. So his kind of justification is we didn't really know what's going on here. For now, you're going to be remote, they kept having like return date for it to get pushed back, and they just like kept getting pushed back and pushed back. Like when we first went remote in like, beginning of March, the original return date was March 31. And then COVID just kind of like exploded, and then it was June 30, and- no, then it was like April 15. And then it was maybe sometime in May, and then it was, "co-ops, you actually will never be coming back into the office." So it was kind of like a waiting game. And I did appreciate my company kind of like keeping us up to date. And kind of like checking in with us. They had a lot of like, online bonding, remote virtual activity things, which to be honest, was like kind of weird, because I was like, "I'm not even really in this company. I'm just an intern." Um, it's also really fun. Like, they had this like, huge like, song performance thing that they did for what was supposed to be our off site. And like all that. So, um, I would say they handled that really well. And in that same kind of proactive manner that you were discussing earlier.

Annie Schaller 8:13

Sure, and being in college and experiencing this, as both someone in the workforce and as someone studying to enter the workforce later, what do you think is the most important thing that either you've learned or you hope other students learn or become knowledgeable about regarding the pandemic?

Trisha Howes 8:36

To clarify, you mean, like, in terms of the pandemic right now?

Annie Schaller 8:40

Yeah, in terms of a pandemic, or its effect on your life or its effect on global culture, society, anything.

Trisha Howes 8:47

Um, I feel like personal responsibility and personal accountability are huge right now. I mean, obviously, no one wants to wear a mask I have worked later for six hours, I do not want to put a mask on my face for six hours, however, I am because one, it's required, and two, it's kind of in the best interest of everyone around me. And I think that people have to hold themselves like personally, not personally responsible because no one person caused this pandemic, but I think you are responsible for- the only thing you're truly responsible for is your actions. And I feel like so often, people try and justify them and blame them on some of their stores. But my grandmother always told me, the only thing you can control is what you do. So I think like taking personal responsibility and being accountable for like, how you're responding to this and how you are choosing to treat other people during this is really huge. And I think that's something that people should always take from this pandemic.

Annie Schaller 10:03

I think that's a fabulous note to end on. Thank you so much for your time and your participation in this project.

Trisha Howes 10:11

Of course. Thank you.