I was in my senior year of high school, the year 2020 when the pandemic reached New York City. As COVID was still relatively new, with no new research and information sources, it was difficult to find a safe space to prevent the spread of this "unknown" virus. In my high school, there was an area in which seniors would sit together in the basement to hang around before class was to start. I had entered the basement one day to papers surrounding the walls stating that we were unable to sit there as the basement would be a cause of the virus spreading. One of my old art teachers from freshmen year came out and would state that students weren't allowed to sit due to dust particles and rodents potentially carrying the virus, which were all located in the basement. Initially, I thought that it was weird that my teacher was blaming the things he mentioned to be the causes of a virus not knowing the large amounts of fear starting to grow in masses. In the blink of an eye, my senior prom was canceled, my graduation was canceled, and my first year of in-person college classes was canceled. Everything was canceled, and online. Throughout the summer, before my first year of college, I was worried to experience my first semester of college. Although it was completely online, I was devastated that I was going to be unable to visit campus and meet new students that share the same desires and passions as I did. However, I was glad that I was able to protect myself and keep those safe around me by engaging in fully online courses during the height of the pandemic. During my first year of college, I experienced a 200-student general chemistry course which was bizarre as it was difficult to believe that, that many students were enrolled in one-course time. Getting resources and aid throughout the two semesters was difficult as this was the first time I had to teach myself a course without getting in-person help. I was lost yet doing my best to achieve what was possible during those times. In order to feel less alone as a student, I joined a zoom "cafe" which allowed students to study with one another from different parts of the world. While

studying, I would join this zoom group to feel as though I was in a study space or a library filled with students. Many resources and applications slowly started to become available, involving creativity and the use of the internet to unite students together. Classes slowly became in-person throughout my second year of college. I remember the campus being very empty with minimal classes still being in person. It nearly felt as though I was walking through a ghost town with no other student attending a class but me. During this year of college, I learned how others experienced the pandemic and how it had affected their education for the past 2 years. As a student now in my third year, it is simple to say how I was able to find personal growth strategies during this pandemic while keeping in mind how the world had changed. It is important to note that the pain and frustration I felt, including others, will not go unseen and will be utilized for future generations to learn from.