

Transcript of Interview with Valeria Rodriguez by Sofia Soto

Interviewee: Valeria Rodriguez

Interviewer: Sofia Soto

Date: 10/16/2023

Location (Interviewee): Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: In this interview Valeria Rodriguez shares about her experience as a St. Mary's University Freshman studying virtually from her home in Honduras. She highlights the ways in which she has overcome challenges and continues to look at the bright side of things. I believe that Valeria's perspective is powerful because her story shows her resilience and can inspire many other International students going through a similar situation.

Sofia Soto 0:00

Hello, my name is Sofia Soto, and I'm here with Valeria Rodriguez. Valeria, would you like to introduce yourself?

Valeria Rodriguez 0:07

Oh, hello. My name is Valeria Rodriguez. I am originally from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. I'm currently double majoring in management entrepreneurship and innovation with a minor in Visual Communication Design, and I am an incoming freshman.

Sofia Soto 0:23

Awesome. So where are you currently living this semester during this pandemic?

Valeria Rodriguez 0:29

So I'm currently living at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, my home country, since on July that I was supposed to move but borders were closed. So I was unable to go into San Antonio on campus.

Sofia Soto 0:46

And has there been a time difference for you that has affected you, if so how?

Valeria Rodriguez 0:52

Actually, yes. So here in Honduras, we are an hour behind from San Antonio. So well, I wouldn't say it affected me because I need to get a little bit more early. But actually, it affected me in the way that, for example, some deadlines or meetings I get confused on. For example, if it's like 2:30, it's 1:30 for me, so I kind of keep track or whatever when I assign a meeting with a professor, I kind of get confused. And one time actually, I got out a bit late at the meeting because I got confused with the time timing.

Sofia Soto 1:32

So along with this challenge, what else has been a challenge that you have experienced adjusting

to online learning?

Valeria Rodriguez 1:41

So about- well, being a freshman actually kind of making a little bit harder because you're new to a whole new rating, a whole new experience. But I would guess what affected me more, it's not being able to be not-virtual, I would say, um, it affected me because I wasn't... I don't want to say I wasn't ready, but it was kind of hard to make this change online. Especially being outside my country, although the university has helped a lot with the Rattler Success Center and that- and that somebody helped me but was very difficult transitioning from high school to university online.

Sofia Soto 2:28

Have you been able to meet other St. Mary students with a similar situation as you? And what does that look like, making friends online?

Valeria Rodriguez 2:37

So I have met, um, some girls from El Salvador. And they actually are in the same situation because since we're all in Central America, we both share the one hour disadvantage, and it's kind of really been really difficult to make friends online, because it's a whole new world- world. I mean, if you want to ask someone, you need to send him a little chat from Zoom, and you don't know who that person is. And you, you cannot experience going out from a class and "Hey, do you want to grab a coffee, or you want to grab something lunch just to meet each other?" Yeah, that's not a cure. And on the other side looks very weird. Like, "Hey, you want to have a Zoom meeting to get to know each other?" So it's been really difficult. I wouldn't say I don't have like so much friends. But I have been concentrating on mainly my school and trying to make friends whenever I- on spring semester when I'm on campus.

Sofia Soto 3:44

Wow. So you do plan on going back this spring semester?

Valeria Rodriguez 3:49

Yeah, so actually, um, borders are now open from Honduras to the United States. So I'm planning on going on spring semester or the next day. Sorry, for the next semester. Sorry.

Sofia Soto 4:05

So along with all of these challenges that you've had to overcome, has there been something that brought light to the situation or you think came good from it?

Valeria Rodriguez 4:20

Actually, um, you start, as I said, before, you start in this new uncertainty thing. As a university as a whole, and I started positive, with a positive mindset. Obviously, there's ups and downs, but I think the positive thing I get from this whole experience is one would be how engaging are my professors even though we're online, they are available every time even though if you aren't-

cannot make it to office hours. On Zoom, you can schedule another Zoom and that's totally, totally fine. And the other thing, I would say is a positive thing was this week that just passed was Business Week for us. And I really, although it was virtual, I really enjoyed seeing how engaged- engaging is St. Mary's is as a community. And they give you a spot even if you are your freshman but don't know so much things about it. And I would say that's what the positive things of online learning is. Our community- how St. Mary's is a community as a whole and welcoming as well.

Sofia Soto 5:33

Wow, that's amazing. Yeah, it's very accessible now. So is there anything more you would like listeners of this interview to know about your experience?

Valeria Rodriguez 5:47

I would say two things. Like one is, being an international student is kind of difficult with being online because you go to another country where you don't... you're not like, acquainted with the culture or different types of things that the country has. Leaving your family's also a big huge step. But I would say it has been difficult and sometimes being out [unintelligible] and being on another side of the coun... on the other side of the world, actually. Um, but I think one thing I wouldn't know is that although I'm online, I have really enjoyed my time. And I really experienced different stuff outside my high school that I have never experienced before. And yeah, mainly just because I'm online, I can- you can have the whole experience and enter a happy freshmen in the new semester.

Sofia Soto 6:49

Thank you so much for your time, Valeria. I really appreciate it. Thank you.