

Transcript of Interview with Eduardo Lopez by Carly Bagley

Interviewee: Eduardo Lopez

Interviewer: Carly Bagley

Date: 10/19/2020

Location (Interviewee): St. Louis, Missouri

Location (Interviewer): Providence, Utah

Abstract: This is an interview I had with Eduardo Lopez over Zoom. He is the Interfraternity Council President at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas. I interviewed him from Providence, Utah while he was living in St. Louis, Missouri.

Carly Bagley 0:01

Okay. It is 2:30pm Mountain Standard Time, and it is October 19th. I am meeting with Eduardo Lopez. Eduardo, would you mind telling me a little bit about yourself?

Eduardo Lopez 0:24

So I'm Eduardo Lopez. Most people will just go by Ed. Ed already. I'm from St. Louis, Missouri. I'm 20 years old. I'm a junior, currently, by year, senior by credits. And then I'm also doing my Master's program as well, currently, on the combined program. I'm doing industrial engineering, and focusing on engineering management as my graduate program. Um, what else... Generic information or...

Carly Bagley 1:02

Yeah, sure, yeah. Just tell me anything about yourself, yeah, that you'd like to talk about.

Eduardo Lopez 1:06

I'm the IFC president, currently, for this academic year, and I'm a member of Sigma Beta Chi fraternity.

Carly Bagley 1:15

Okay, can you explain a little bit more about those for someone who isn't familiar with fraternities?

Eduardo Lopez 1:20

So fraternities, basically, it's just like a social- well, ours is a social club. Basically, we gather, hang out. It's just- I don't know. It's just a group of guys that like to be with each other just to hang out, have fun, but we also focus on school a lot. Right now, I think we currently have number one spot or the number two spot for the highest GPA on campus with a 3.4 or around there. And we have a big alumni base. We have range from Arizona, to Florida, to Puerto Rico, to Canada, and then up in the Midwest as well. The fraternity actually was started in St. Louis,

which is kind of interesting to me from being- it's a local chapter. So local means that it's only one chapter of that person, they don't have a national office. For say, like, Sigma- Lambda Chi that we have on campus, they're a national organization, which means they have chapters all over the United States. So Sigma Beta Chi will only be found at St. Mary's University whereas Lambda Chi Alpha will be found in Florida, New York, wherever you go, basically. If they have that chapter, they'll be there.

Carly Bagley 2:40

Gotcha. How did you get involved with your fraternity? And how did you become the new president for IFC?

Eduardo Lopez 2:55

So basically, I got involved with fraternity without knowing. Basically, I had- he's currently my big, but he was in my Calculus Two class my freshman year. And he never mentioned that he was in a fraternity. He never mentioned anything. And he was just like, "Hey, you wanna come hang out with both of us?" I was like, "Sure." So basically, it was just welcoming and everything to me. And that's what kind of struck me the most. It didn't feel like it was being pushed on me. I didn't even know- like, I have hung out with every single one of them, but didn't know they were a part of the fraternity until they started having the promotions for Greek Week and Recruitment Week and everything. So that's what was what found me interesting, especially about this fraternity, that they weren't really pushing the whole thing. They're just like, "If you want to be with us, you can be with us. If you don't want to be with us, we're still gonna be your friend and everything." That's what I really liked about that. And then my first year as a new member into the fraternity. So new members just basically you just join. There's a member and a new member; it's just a differentiation, which I think the only reason is for the new member cost is like \$20 to have a new member and then it's like \$15 for an active. I think that's really the big difference. But my first year as a new member, I was not told but like... offered the position to run for recruitment chair in IFC. So I decided I was like, "Might as well." So for election, we just have to do a two to three minute speech on why you think you'll be the best person for the position you're running for. And my freshman year I ran for recruitment chair, got elected by the other fraternities as well. It's basically, each fraternity has a vote, and they vote who they think would be the best fit. So I got elected as fraternity recruitment- IFC recruitment chair my freshman year. And then from there, the following year, was like my active year where in the Fall and in the Spring, I started doing my job with basically promoting Recruitment Week, running it, and seeing who's gonna be joining and who's not. And then last year, when COVID hit, we went to online voting. And that's why I decided to run for IFC President. So to become IFC President, you have to have a year in IFC to become the IFC President. So I decided to run for that position, and I was elected as well for this position, and this brings us up to date now.

Carly Bagley 5:53

Okay, great. Awesome, and could you clarify IFC? What does that stand for?

Eduardo Lopez 6:00

It's Interfraternal Council. It's basically the on-campus executive board for the fraternity. So if they have an issue, they want to host an event, they come to us, and then we can help them out, find that event. So most of the charities they donate to, if they want to host an event, they usually just come through us, and we'll approve it, try to be helpful in any way we can by providing them a space so they can host their event.

Carly Bagley 6:33

Okay. Gotcha. What other roles do you take on as the president of IFC?

Eduardo Lopez 6:40

Currently, I just oversee, my five executive board members we have from different chapters. And we basically just plan out the entire year: what we want to see, a goal we want to accomplish. The big event coming up is next week, we have Greek Week. And it's going to be online virtual. So for us, it was a big task for us to convert what we usually do in person to having new options for online. And especially trying to be inclusive of everyone, trying to make it not very costly because we know people are still going through a hard time and everything. So basically, all the events this week are free. Zoom is obviously free. We have a Tik Tok challenge or Tik Tok tournament, basically for the sororities, and that's free. Tik Tok is free to everyone. Everyone has a cell phone. Then for the guys, we have a Warzone tournament. And basically, most of the guys already have a gaming console, and the game is free for everyone. Tuesday we're playing Among Us; it's free for everyone who get on the phone. And then Wednesday, we have a guest speaker about relationships in college. And then Thursday, trivia, which is another free event. And then Friday, we have a costume party. So that that was the big challenge of finding things that would be free and that would be interesting to the students.

Carly Bagley 8:30

And online too, as well, right?

Eduardo Lopez 8:32

Yeah.

Carly Bagley 8:35

Can you tell me a little bit more about how things have changed with the fraternity system with COVID?

Eduardo Lopez 8:49

Yeah, so usually on Sundays, most chapters have their chapter meeting. Basically, they all gather- basically plan out their week schedule, what they want to do, what they want to see. So that's had to be converted to online. There's Zoom, which I don't think that's like the biggest downside to that. I mean, it's convenient for everyone just to be on Zoom. But it's also not the same as having everyone in the same room, just being able to see the reactions, and you can feel the tension or you can feel like the excitement in the room. That's definitely changed. And then another big thing that changed is recruitment. We got hit hard this Fall not being able to be there and promote it and actually be able to be with each other. And that's a big thing about recruitment. Anyone into fraternities, it's about the stuff you guys do together. And that's the whole point of a fraternity is to be together, to have those people close to you that you can rely on the most. And being online, that kind of just takes a big toll on us because we're not able to support someone there when they need us in person. Obviously, you will be there online or however we can be there, but it's not the same being next to each other, supporting each other in a game or in intramurals, most of us play intramurals, and the ones that are not on the team, all the other people were usually there on this sidelines supporting each other. But that's just some of the things that were taken away by COVID, but we're making the best we can with everything being online.

Carly Bagley 10:38

Gotcha. How else has COVID affected you as a student at St. Mary's?

Eduardo Lopez 10:52

Well, all my classes are online. So I don't think the motivation is there as much as if I was in class. It is just different being at home and not being at school. So currently, I'm not on campus or in Texas at all. Being virtual kind of made me more responsible of what I had to do, yes, but it also made me less responsible what had I to do because it's just the lack of motivation. Yes, I wake up for every class, 8:20[am], 6:30pm. I'll be there. But it's just the lack of motivation that I really wish- I would rather be out doing something than having to be here in class or sitting down for two and a half hours, just staring into the screen, getting information. But the one thing I've noticed is a lot more things on us are put on us to be more independent studying. So it's kind of a little more difficult because I'm used to being a study group. So I like studying with people, and having that change where well, they're at home, they're gonna be a little bit more responsible at home, like parents need them to watch the kids, or go to the grocery store for them, or do something like that. It takes up study time, which it is a downside. But I mean, it's family. You'll do whatever you need to do for them, but that's the one toll of a student. And I love being in school. I love the feeling of being a class, being able to learn, see the professor. And I know it's the same with the professor not being able to see us in person, see your body reactions. And as they can tell when one person's face has it a certain face and another person has a different face, they can tell that "Whoa, okay this kid didn't get it. I'll just go over it real quick again," or, "This kid did get it." It's like, "Okay, well, we don't need to go over it again." Um, I think that's just the

big difference is just not being there. Not the most fun thing, but it's something we have to deal with, which is not the end of the world.

Carly Bagley 13:11

Yeah. Yeah. Would you mind talking- so... Were you on campus when things started to close down?

Eduardo Lopez 13:22

Um, yeah, actually I was.

Carly Bagley 13:24

Yeah. Would you mind talking a little bit about that and what that was like?

Eduardo Lopez 13:30

So I was on campus. Are you a recent graduate or...

Carly Bagley 13:35

I'm a grad student. So this is my first semester at St. Mary's, but I also am not on campus right now, so...

Eduardo Lopez 13:43

Well, for St. Mary's, we closed down in March, like during spring break week. And for spring break, me and my roommate decided to- well me and my suitemate decided to drive up to St. Louis because my other roommate was here. So we decided to drive to St. Louis because he's always wanted to come up here and see how it is. So we decided to head out here, and we left on a Tuesday, 12AM like, as early as possible. We drove through the night. We got here around 4PM on Wednesday, and that's when we got the news that spring break was gonna be extended for two weeks. So we had a whole week and then another week on top of that to be here. And basically, they were saying that this extra week was to allow teachers to get their online certification for teaching. And at first, we thought it was like, "Oh, cool." Like, we don't think nothing big is gonna happen with this. But, it turned out to be- we get next week we get an email saying, "Hey, if you can go back home, go back home. Come get your stuff, go back home. Or if you can't go back home, we'll plan something out." So I know most of the internationals couldn't go back home because their borders were already shut down. So I had a couple friends that were forced to stay on campus, basically, not by St. Mary's force, but by their hometown government is closing down the border. So my friend from Nicaragua, he was stuck at St. Mary's because they shut down their borders. He had no way of getting home. So I think St. Mary's did the best job they could of accommodating everyone's situation, being understanding that some people just can't go home. They're gonna have to stay on campus. As for me, I drove all the way up here, and then I drive back. And this is when I took my other roommate, the one from St. Louis. We

drove down together. The one from Texas flew back early to get his stuff and move out, so we decided to just drive down, pick up our stuff. We took about two days to pack, clean up, and head back home. But they gave us about a week to get accommodated to be like, "I'll be there on Wednesday." So they set up a time slot for you to get there and how long you're going to be there, so students wouldn't be as gathered or rushed anymore, so they spaced it out, basically, which was a good option. But yeah, St. Mary's did the best they could to accommodate for everyone's, housing needs and anything they needed. They also had a fund distributed. So for me, they basically paid for my trip down and back to get my stuff, gas wise, which was very helpful. So I really appreciate that from them.

Carly Bagley 16:57

What did that feel like, that whole experience, when- when it was happening for you?

Eduardo Lopez 17:05

I just felt like one big blur. So I'm not sure if you know, but St. Mary's and my home is like 16 hours away. So driving down, and we do it in one straight shot, so driving down there, packing up as quickly as we could, and heading back, it just felt like one long night, man. Just having to do that barely sleeping because you want to get everything quick and done and be as helpful as you can to the school because they're being helpful to us. So me and my roommate, we did the best we could, leaving most of our stuff with one of our fraternity brothers at his garage. They were more than welcome to gather our stuff. And it was just one big blur, basically, just barely sleeping. Most sleep we did was in the car driving. Um, but that's basically the whole feeling. It was just one big blur of everything mashed together, trying to move everything quick and being as efficient as possible.

Carly Bagley 18:16

So after that initial change with COVID, what have things been like for you since then?

Eduardo Lopez 18:33

Well at first, when I got back here, it was different. It was definitely difficult having online class, especially with one of the classes being in a lab. I'm more of an in-person class learner. So, obviously, it wasn't the easiest for me, but I dealt with it, still got good grades, and did my best to be as helpful as I could at home as well. I have a younger sister who also had to go to online. At the time, she's in the second grade, so she doesn't really know that much about a computer, how to be on Zoom, or how to do homework without a teacher. Kind of explaining things like that. So having her here, was like becoming another teacher for her. Helping my mom out as well because she had to be transferred from her job to at-home job. So she had to do all the transferring and everything. And then my dad was also hit hard with the jobs and everything, so it was just a different aspect to everything. You had to be more cautious of where you go, what you did. And then most of the things here were closing down. So most of the places like grocery

stores and banks were shut down, just to drive through. But grocery stores and pharmacies and everything, that's what remained open for a limited amount of people. But other than that, during the summer, it kind of changed. The numbers were starting to go down. And so people started opening up again. I started working with my dad. We do construction, so it's not really that many people we're interacting with. It's more of independent work. So there's four of us in a team, and we know where we've been and everything. Basically, we're all family, so that was good. And then from there, it was just waiting to see what school decided to do for the fall. And this is where they decided that everything will be online. They told us, I think in about early August before we moved down, so we had to change that up. The plan was to go back to school, but since everything was online, there was no point of having to go back to school when I can do everything from here on my computer. But that's the biggest change, basically just waiting for school to also decide because they have a big task of seeing what they have to do following the Bexar County rules and the government rules, whatever they need to do best for their students.

Carly Bagley 21:30

Last question, is there anything that you would like to add or share about your experience at St. Mary's during this year and with COVID?

Eduardo Lopez 21:42

Oh, no, not really. I don't know, I'm kind of understanding of the whole situation that I know most graduates didn't really get the graduation they wanted, which probably wasn't the best option. But, I just think, yes, it's sad that they didn't, but it's a good thing they didn't. That this is basically for everyone's health concerns. So you don't know who's gonna be there, grandma, grandpa. They wanted to be there as well. But it's just something that everyone had to understand, that the school is doing the best they can. They can't control what's going on. They try to do everything they can to prevent it, which I think they've actually done a pretty good job of this semester, with only, I think three cases on campus. And those have been controlled. But I think that they've done a phenomenal job of everything, accommodating to everyone's needs, making sure that people are staying safe, that people get the attention they need from the teachers. One big thing that's been discussed in the student advisory boards is that students need the mental health as well. So teachers are more lenient of, "You know what this class is an hour and 15 minutes, let's take a 10 minute break halfway through." Which is reasonable. It's super nice. And it's really helpful for the students to get out, go to the bathroom, grab a quick snack, do something, stretch your legs, which I just think the school's done a phenomenal job with everything.

Carly Bagley 23:29

Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. And I'm gonna quit recording.