Written by Lili Stevens.

For the students who have been lucky enough to live on campus, or who live close enough to campus to participate, the University of Puget Sound has been hosting free COVID testing days for students, faculty, staff and community members since early September 2020. In these events, hosted by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, participants are able to get tested and receive results quickly for the small price of waiting in line outside the Wheelock Student Center.

On most days that I have participated in, the line took no longer than 30 minutes, even when I had to fill out the consent papers
November’s first testing day seemed to include more volunteers than other days, with people walking up and down the line, collecting used pens and distributing forms, and three people performing the tests instead of the usual two. In reference to these volunteers, their work has not gone unnoticed. “It was long, and it was wet and cold, but like everyone was nice and people giving out pens and forms and everything were really great,” first-year Austyn Smith said about her experience in the line waiting to get tested on November 18.

Smith’s statement brings up the point of the temperamental Pacific Northwest weather that caused a cold rain to splash down upon volunteers and those getting tested alike on the November testing day. Of course, a little rain rarely scares off Puget Sound students, but it’s still worth mentioning the conditions endured to be tested for COVID free of charge. The general opinion of these events seems to be annoyed but grateful at the same time.

“I mean it sucks to have to wait in line for that long, especially when it’s cold and rainy and windy, but I mean, you know it makes sense, I get the reasons why it’s gotta be done, just you know, the process is unfortunate,” first-year Harry Gers said. The process is indeed unfortunate, and when it is wet and cold, it’s not going to get any better.

At one point in the day, students were playing music out of a window from the second floor of the Trimble Hall, where the line snaked by. This may have boosted morale, as I remember...
the first testing days all those months ago in September when the volunteers were blasting Katy Perry at 10 a.m. No matter how anyone feels about the process itself, the frequency of testing and the other restrictions Puget Sound has in place has been undeniably effective in containing the spread of COVID-19 within the Puget Sound community. According to the COVID-19 Dashboard on the University of Puget Sound webpage, every on-campus testing day has reported 0 positive test results since the first one on August 29, 2020. If these processes continue, adjusting for a possible increase in students next semester, I am hopeful that our community can continue through the epidemic and thrive.
Written by Hadley Polinsky.

Graduating college is a major accomplishment and should be celebrated accordingly, but Fall 2020 graduates may not get to experience the normal fanfare that accompanies graduation. Not only will many Fall 2020 graduates be graduating without their friends by their sides, but they are also entering the real world during a global pandemic.

“I am excited to be done with school and to be moving on to the next phase of my life but I am kind of bummed that I am graduating with no one else around me. It is kind of like a very
anticlimactic ending,” fourth year communications major Maddie Hanses said.

While some have been planning for their entire college career to graduate this semester, some students changed their plans so that they could graduate now. Hanses was originally supposed to graduate Spring 2021 but decided to take summer courses and graduate a semester early. Fourth year Eric Haupt also changed his plans. Haupt was originally supposed to graduate Spring 2020, but he took a leave of absence and is graduating one semester later than planned.

“I mean it feels like it’s what’s good for me personally. Of course, it’s nice to graduate with my class but this is the option that was best for me so I’m taking it,” Haupt said.

In the movies, the senior year experience includes constant parties and practically nonexistent classes. Even though this is not an accurate depiction, this could not be farther from the truth for current seniors. Due to the current COVID restrictions, classes are online, and most people are unable to spend time with their friends in large groups. For some, this has made a disappointing last semester.

“Personally, the in-person experiences of class does carry value. So online classes are not the ideal situation for me. And if I wasn’t so college career focused I probably would have taken this as proof since I don’t think this experience is worth the expense,” Haupt said.

The pandemic is also making it difficult to make plans once the semester is over, but Loggers are doing their best at figuring out what to do next. Normally, recent college graduates may travel, but this cannot happen right now. The other common reactions
to graduating are to apply to graduate school or get a job, both of which may be challenging.

“Coronavirus happened, so I’m probably going to be laying low working on grad school applications, pretty much exclusively until summer starts or the vaccine turns up and I can look for a job,” Haupt said.

“The ideal situation would be, the place I’m working for right now would give me a full-time position that would be remote, so I could just continue doing what I’m doing. But there’s a lot up in the air,” Hanses said.

Despite this semester not being exactly what they thought their senior year would look like, many have still enjoyed their experiences at the university as a whole and are hopeful for what the future may hold.

“I really liked the food and the S.U.B. to be completely honest, and The Cellar. Those were highlights of my college career. But I think right now, the thing that I missed the most, and was my overall favorite part of college would be my friends, and like the people that I’ve met,” Hanses said.

“There’s a lot of uncertainty that comes with the pandemic and there’s a lot of uncertainty that comes with looking for more education, after your undergraduate years even if it is nothing extraordinary going on with the world. So there’s like stress involved but I’m optimistic about what the future holds,” Haupt said.
Diwali 2020 and New Religious Accommodations at the University of Puget Sound

Celebrate light and improvements: Diwali celebrations and state-wide recognition of non-Christian holidays in Washington

Written by Rachel “Checks” De Guzman.

Have you lit your candles yet? Are you dressed your best? Have you reached that internal point of disco ball chic? Are you ready to dance?
These are the questions that a former student at the University of Puget Sound, Sahiti Shankar, once asked me in 2018 when we celebrated Diwali together.

At the time, Shankar had long missed her home community and remembered her favorite memories of Diwali with them. Community is such a large part of this time of year. She was so particular about making a traditional dinner with lots of aloo, or potato, for her guests, going to lengths in finding the perfect chili paste for the dish. She performed pujas, or prayers, to Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, prosperity, purity and success. “On Diwali we light candles, called diya, and we pray to Lakshmi for renewed prosperity for ourselves and our families,” Shankar shares, “and we light sparklers as a symbol of gratitude and celebration for all that she has blessed us with so far.”

This year, the holiday took place on November 14. Diwali is a celebration of the light that conquers darkness, of the good that conquers bad, and of joy given to and received by family and community. Millions of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Newar Buddhists gather to observe Diwali all around the world. In India, Diwali is one of the most important holidays. There, “everyone is celebrating it,” Keshreeyaji Oswal describes, a fifth year student at the University of Puget Sound. People dress their homes with festive decorations and lights and often wear their best clothes. Oswal includes that a “mutual bond with your community” makes the atmosphere joyful.
Since his sophomore year, Oswal organized the Diwali celebrations at the university, placing collaboration and education at the center of his philosophy. For the reason that each person celebrates Diwali differently, Oswal prioritizes the freedom of students who host the holiday to interpret their own meanings of Diwali. Oswal revealed that he and the University Chaplaincy are searching for a current South Asian student at the University of Puget Sound to hopefully continue these efforts.

Diwali parties look largely different in America in comparison to the celebrations in India. In India, Oswal compares Diwali to Christmas, particularly the lights and the decorating of houses. Fourth year student Tanvi Asur loosely compares the level of energy to that of patriotic Americans on July Fourth, only because of its intensity.

The extravagance of Diwali is a “wake up call” to Asur: Diwali in America is a “hypothetical of what could be.” She imagined what it would be like to live in India where she would probably observe more holidays and auspicious days of the year.

The “proximity to culture,” as Asur puts it, is how intimate immigrants and their children who were born in America feel to their home culture. It influences how people gather for the holiday and which traditions are upheld which is why everyone celebrates Diwali differently. Celebrations depend on a kind of “improv” as Asur put it.
This is something that Shankar, Oswal and Asur have struggled with. In their own ways, they learned how to celebrate Diwali or to be heard as Indian and South Asian-American students at the university. How to celebrate one’s identity as a non-white American with a uniquely complex culture that holds its own traditions and holidays when you feel alone? When celebration doubles as education for allies.

At a predominantly white university like the University of Puget Sound, Asur reminisced, “how good I had it” having such a close “proximity to my own culture” in San Jose. In Tacoma, celebrating Diwali is tedious if she has to make such lengths to find not just the foods she likes, but “the good ones.”


Students who celebrate religious holidays that are not widely recognized by the American calendar can take advantage of the new religious accommodations. “Students need to indicate needing the holidays during the first two weeks of the semester,” Wright informs. A full description of the complete statement of the accommodation must be on every syllabus.
are “not optional, not something to dance around,” Wright continues.

COVID-19 took attention from this positive news, but this article intends to inform the entire student body of their rights. Amid the “weirdness” that is surely to come in Spring 2021, Wright assures that COVID-19 should not change the implementations of this law. He encourages students to take full advantage of it.

Student life and religious life on campus stalled due to the approximate year-long quarantine that COVID-19 brought on. Even so, for this year’s Diwali, Oswal still distributed Diwali gift bags to the campus community — even to President Crawford — Wright and his team worked to promote the new Religious Accommodations, Asur celebrated Diwali over Facetime with her extended family, and Shankar celebrated at home with her loved ones.

During this time of year, I would have expected to see the Diwali promotion flyers along the billboards in the Student Union Building (S.U.B.), up the stairwells of Wyatt Hall and McIntyre Hall, and in the basement of the library. Memories of Diwali in 2018 are still some of my favorites. My friends and I lit diyas and laughed warmly that night in our little stay. Sparklers in hand, we danced and danced and danced under the stars. Music loud, we yelled into the city and across the water, “Happy Diwali!”
Written by Hadley Polinsky and Lili Stevens.

Many people are often drawn to liberal arts schools because of the experiences one obtains in classes and interacting with their peers. With online classes, this is virtually impossible. Not only are many students missing out on the quintessential college experience, but classes have proven to be challenging over the online format.

“I think this semester has been harder for me cause I have lost a lot of motivation by being in the same space all the time. For me, I am a pretty noisy person. So walking around campus between class, studying for exams, and just having human contact is how I function. Now I feel like I am missing out on the experience of college because of this online format.”

Many of the students who have been struggling have been those who are more extroverted and need the social interaction with their peers to function well in school.
classes kept me somewhat sane," fourth year Anna MacLeod said.

This has been an issue for us as well. With online classes, there is no separation between space for class and space for relaxing. Classes, homework, eating, sleeping and watching Netflix all take place in the same room. It has been challenging for us to separate leisure from work. Our classes are enjoyable, but it is hard to enjoy them when there is no break from schoolwork.

In order to limit the spread of COVID, the university’s administration decided to take fall break away and give us the entire week off for Thanksgiving. This decision, however, has proven to increase feelings of burnout. Without a break part way through the semester in which we get to spend time with friends and enjoy a few days without classes, the semester feels as if it is dragging on.

“I did not enjoy not having a fall break. I feel pretty burnt out and tired from just being consistently on my computer and having to be ready to be back in class. ... I have not been able to take a break as much and also have not really been able to not be ‘on’ in that I have to show up to class and have not decompressed from school,” MacLeod said.

From the perspective of the professors, it seems they are just as upset about it as we are.

“It didn't affect my teaching and schedule, but it certainly was a terrible idea. Students *need* a fall break to catch their breaths, catch up, process the work they’re doing and get rest. (And faculty need the time for rest and grading, too.),” professor Brett Rogers of the Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies department said.
With students across the world learning online at all levels of education, it’s easy to find another person of your own age struggling with similar experiences of exhaustion and burnout, but little attention is placed on the teachers whose classes are contributing to these feelings. While at the college level, professors teaching courses online is not new, as online colleges such as the University of Phoenix were around pre-pandemic, nearly all United States colleges as well as primary education institutions of public and private elementary through high schools are hosting online courses. At the University of Puget Sound, our education has persisted through the pandemic, thanks to the staff and professors.

Catching up with some professors and discussing the topic of online learning at a secondary education level, it seems that while teaching styles may not have changed too much, their routines and sanity levels have changed drastically.

“I’m not just burnt out: I’m fried to crisp,” Professor Rogers said.

“I would say that my teaching style has remained true to its original form. … For my classes, I am also able to replicate the same structure, organization and content that I would if we were in person,” professor Dawn Padula of the School of Music said. She also mentioned some struggles with technology in this process, something everyone has experienced in some form or another in the last eight months.

“Maybe it’s all the blue light exposure, but I find myself much more exhausted at the end of a teaching day that is on Zoom. I think it’s also because everything takes longer, and things that were once easy and routine are now all new and have to be re-thought,” Professor Padula said. The concept of ‘Zoom fatigue’ has circulated around popular media, discussing the exhaustion...
that arises out of continued exposure to computers and blue light. This has been a problem mentioned by both students and professors but is a problem where the solution, spending less time in front of a screen, seems more and more unreachable with every day we spend learning in an online format.

It has been a hard semester for all of us, students and professors alike. With Thanksgiving break coming up in a few days, the semester is starting to come to a close. We just have to survive finals.