

Describe obstacles you have overcome and how they heightened your growth as a student and eventual professional.

The biggest set of obstacles I have had to overcome centered around transitioning to college in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences challenged me in many ways but also helped me grow as a student and eventual professional. Transitioning to college during a pandemic was difficult. I moved away from home to an isolated environment while adjusting to living independently and a more intense set of schoolwork to balance.

I experienced bouts of loneliness, homesickness, and anxiety. After experiencing all of these feelings firsthand, I believe this helped me to better empathize with others. I try to think of what people are experiencing behind closed doors and treat everyone with kindness as that can make a world of a difference to someone. Empathy is extremely important in our profession. In order to be an effective clinician, you have to recognize that the cause of someone's disorder, like a stroke, can take a toll on many aspects of a person's life. Their diagnosis in general may affect their self-esteem, social interactions, and overall mental health. I feel that as an eventual professional, I will be prepared to empathize with clients.

I also believe this challenge gave me a great mentality for handling more difficulties in the future. I know that I've overcome something difficult before so I can do it again. I take this mindset with me through any obstacle I continue to face. For example, if I am having a demanding week academically, I tell myself I know I have the skills to be successful because I have gotten through tough weeks before. This mindset will be useful when facing difficulties as a professional.

Through my experiences, I learned to reach out when I am having trouble. Having the support of friends and faculty on campus gave me the tools that I needed to help me adjust to college life. Throughout my academic career, I have continued to reach out if I need any kind of help. I have been lucky enough to have the support of older members of the CSD program, my peers, the professionals I have observed, and my professors on campus. Everyone I have encountered in the field has been

encouraging and helpful. I know that I can continue to reach out to others throughout my career and there will be someone willing to offer encouragement and advice.

These experiences also helped me become very independent. I learned to be more sure of myself and my own decisions. I am more assured in my ability to succeed in my academics and balance that with other commitments. I am confident that this assurance will stay with me as I transition to becoming a student clinician and eventually begin my career.

As a student, having an unconventional start to college gave me a lot of time to understand how I study and learn best. I was able to implement these habits into my college career to help me become a successful student. I am especially motivated to implement these habits because doing well in my academics will give me the knowledge to be successful as a clinician.

After coming out of the pandemic, I was eager to get involved on campus. I immersed myself in countless organizations where I met and worked with a variety of people. I also took advantage of leadership roles where I currently serve on two executive boards. Being an active student has helped me to build good time management, leadership, and professional social skills.

Overall, my difficult transition to college taught me the beauty of growing from challenges. I no longer want to run from my struggles, but instead, face them head-on and find out what knowledge I come out with on the other side. I look forward to welcoming the challenges that I will face throughout the rest of my academic career. Professionally, I know these challenges will help me grow as a Speech-Language Pathologist.