

ID&LA Student Updates

A Lesson In Compassion

Posted on [May 4, 2020](#) by [jdwilso](#)

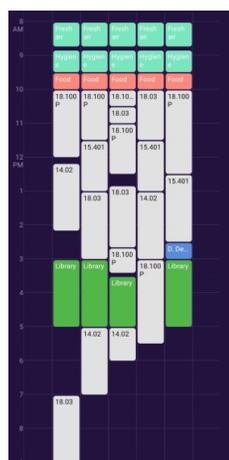
Today's guest post in our series on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student life at MIT is brought to you by Sabrina Alix Henry, a course 18 major, returning student, and a member of the Barker/Rotch and Hayden teams!

A Lesson in Compassion

Last spring, I was at my local community college while applying to return from leave. In the fall, I took only 3 classes to get back into the swing of things. Then, my first semester back up to 4 courses and BAM, the world is ending.

I didn't have to move on short notice like most students, but the pandemic has impacted me in the ways it's impacted many of us. I call my family more, I worry about my classmates, I worry about essential workers, I worry about money and learning to cook for myself, and I still have to get my work done. I have so much less time to get work done than I did before and the drop in productivity has been driving me CRAZY!

Now that I've finally found some rhythm, I wanted to share how things went for me.



This is from Week 2. I worked more than is scheduled here since I was just getting the hang of it all.

Spring Break: The closest thing I had to an actual break was the Saturday before classes started. I didn't do any work of my own, but did help another classmate with a pset I'd finished. I spent the rest of this time working on a problem set and paper for my CI-M. I very sadly delete my calendar for the remainder of the semester as there aren't really classes anymore.

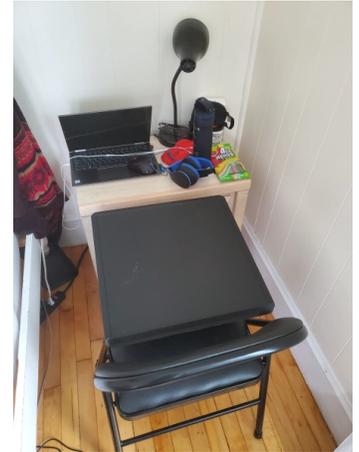
Week 1: Classes start. It's a lot. The new schedule for my CI-M looks almost identical to the one before all this, which freaks me out, and lecture is fast paced as ever but now with the scrolling whiteboard on Zoom, I can no longer see the previous work like when there were several blackboards side by side. I hit a wall on Wednesday and just crash. I attend a SPXCE meeting that night and what I remember most from that is the quote "We're not working from home, we're staying home in an emergency while trying to work." I see a dean from S-cubed the next day, and email the professor on Friday to discuss an incomplete.

Week 2: I've successfully secured that incomplete and now have to catch up on the lectures I missed the last week. I start using my calendar again, but this time using my Gmail account instead of the MIT one so that I can color code my events. I schedule time for fresh air, hygiene and food in the morning and cap my days with a library "shift". I use a foldable desk with my bedside table for work, and relax when the table is folded in the evenings. This week looks wildly packed in my calendar and I'm glad I got through it.

Week 3: This is the week that I noticed I need to start the work day with something other than my CI-M because, despite the incomplete, I've developed some resentment for the continued fast pace of the course and it made it hard to get motivated to work. So, I began starting my days with Differential equations. Let me tell you, the lectures are hilarious. The professor starts each lecture with an incredible claim about where he's doing the lecture from. My favorites so far are a cruise ship with Boris Johnson and Tom Hanks, and Air Force 18.03. I also had my first meeting with my Student Success Coach who happens to be a library staff member. I'm incredibly thankful for her.

Week 4: The Monday of this week was Patriot's Day. I gave myself a well needed break and it really made the rest of my week. I ran into some personal issues, but resolved them by talking it out with friends and family, and my Coach. I also started using Zoom with a friend so we could keep each other productive.

Week 5: This week has been good. The semester's almost done, I'm tired, but proud of the effort I've put in, and feeling good about myself. For me, this whole mess has been a big lesson in compassion. I don't get too upset when I have an off day anymore, and it's a relief to be able to handle things like that. I know there are a lot of different students in a vast variety of circumstances right now and I can only hope that everyone is able to ask for the help they need if and when a problem arises. I thought I shouldn't because there are students that have it worse, but everyone needs a little help sometimes, and there are people happy to give it.



The desk fits between the bedside table and the wall when folded.

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