

Quarantine- what I, as an Auburn student, didn't know that I needed

Auburn students are infamous for their high levels of campus involvement. Nearly 5,000 students live on campus each year, according to the [Auburn Administration](#), and these students' lives are centered around every campus event that the university hosts. This is a strength that Auburn University possesses, and, in of itself, student involvement is a positive thing.

According to the Auburn University Office of Student Involvement [Annual Report](#), 5,522 events and permits were submitted to AUinvolve from 2018-2019. This averages to about 15 events per day that Auburn students are encouraged to attend and participate in.

But, when COVID-19 hit the United States and quarantine began in March of 2020, the pace of college students' days suddenly slowed. With no more driving to class, staying on campus for meetings, or afternoon rehearsals, schedules were confined to school, sleep, and an unexpected quietness.

When virtual finals tapered off, I was left feeling overwhelmingly empty, as every activity that I had thrown myself into evaporated. No more band rehearsal, no more sorority meetings, and no more classes, only stillness. I had finally been forced to stop running a marathon on my hamster wheel.

I found myself looking at the past several months of my life from a bird's eye view. They looked like the months of a typical Auburn student, filled with meetings and events to make myself

more well-rounded. But when I looked closer, I saw that I had traded my soul for these eternally worthless things.

As the summer crept along, the dust from the past year of my life was settled. I saw that the one thing that my heart had desired, spending daily quiet time with my mind focused on God, wasn't on display for others to see. Tragically, this is why I didn't put it on my daily to-do list.

I was left with four more months of thinking about where I will choose to invest myself in when life reverts back to normal.

Four months of reflection.

Four months of learning how to be more intentional.

Four months of prayer.

I no longer wanted to be drowning in a sea of commitments. I wanted to go through the rest of my college experience with peace, a renewed mind, and constant joy. The stillness of quarantine tasted sweet to my soul, and I was determined to carry this new-found stillness back to college.

During quarantine, I had an identity change. My soul that had spent years striving to be known as a 'perfect girl' had finally found rest in Jesus Christ. I no longer carried the heavy weight of perfection because Christ started carrying it for me. A peace that passed my understanding flowed over me, and my life had never felt so light and airy.

When August rolled around, I moved back to Auburn knowing that I would not be involved in all of the activities that I was once drowning in. I didn't want to be. I valued my time more than I ever had before, and I wanted to sparingly spread it around to commitments that mattered to me. I longed to keep time set aside for stillness and rest.

After several long months of quarantine, when Auburn students returned to the loveliest village, the air in Auburn had changed. The birds that perched themselves on the Auburn oak trees sang louder, the aroma from the campus Einstein bagels smelled sweeter, and the warm late-August sun shone brighter. Something had changed.

Auburn students no longer took Auburn for granted. I no longer took life for granted.

Students began their college schedules again with a sense of gratitude, a sense of passion, and a sense of lightheartedness that had never been felt before. Despite the limitations on the many clubs, organizations, and classes, there was joy in the heart of Auburn.

An uncircumstantial joy that the [Auburn creed](#) defines as “a sound mind”.

I, along with many other Auburn students, have learned the value of saying ‘no’. Saying ‘no’ to more commitments. Saying ‘no’ to unnecessary anxieties. Saying ‘no’ to the temptation to continue to fill my schedule because I have empty time slots.

Because, living a life that is centered around contentment and peace is worth fighting for.

Making time for stillness isn't a burden after all- it is a gift that has changed our campus.