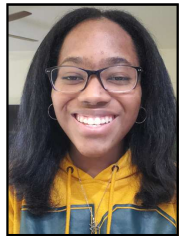


Post-graduation plans pressure seniors



By
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It's interesting how something we've looked forward to all our lives suddenly turns into a sense of doom. With the end of the school year approaching, seniors are getting closer to graduation and the end of their high school lives.

This looming date has forced us 17 and 18-year-olds to figure out what we want to do with our lives; especially with National College Decision Day being, what feels like, way too soon.

Some seniors weren't, and some still aren't, even sure if they want to go to college in August. And even if they decide they don't want to spend more years of their lives in school, they aren't sure what they're going to do otherwise.

Senior Tramel Brown currently has "no plans" as he chooses between not attending a post-secondary school and committing to Lynn University.

What's stopping him from attending Lynn and accepting the \$72,000 in financial aid? Brown said, "The will to live."

As for me, I knew I wanted to go to college. I'm lucky enough to know what I'm passionate about and would be able to make a career out of. However, I was barely prepared for the admissions process; I had not even thought about applying to schools by the time my friend told me she had already committed to one.

It was not that applying to schools was difficult, but it was a nuisance.

"I was pretty indifferent about the entire thing," senior Shariah Curton said. "Just repeating the same information over and over again was annoying."

Not to mention the never-ending emails from universities I've never heard of, the essays, the need for recommendation letters, the fees simply to apply to a school, etc.

*"I wasn't able to visit schools that I wanted to apply to, to get a feel of the campus which affected my decisions greatly." —
Danielle Neish*

I applied to five schools, was accepted by four and wait-listed by the other. It seemed as if fate had it out for me because the school that wait-listed me was the only one I knew I could commit to with no qualms.

This put me in a dilemma for over five months trying to decide which school I would attend. It wasn't until about two weeks before the decision deadline that I committed to the University of Central Florida.

Even then, I made that choice solely because I know I can always transfer somewhere else if I'm not happy there.

COVID-19 also caused additional worries and complications for seniors deciding what their next step is.

"I wasn't able to visit schools

that I wanted to apply to, to get a feel of the campus which affected my decisions greatly," senior Danielle Neish said.

"I've gone back and forth about going to college down here or moving up to Orlando and getting a job for months," senior Shallon Noland said. "I finally realized that if I took a gap year that I wouldn't go back (to school)."

Of course, not everyone was as stressed as I was with the admissions process. Some seniors knew exactly what they wanted to do with their lives.

"(The admissions process) was fairly simple for the most part," Neish said. "I was able to connect with friends and counselors to answer some of my questions," Neish said.

Neish plans to attend the University of South Florida for two years to get her associate's then the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University for her bachelor's degree. Afterwards, she hopes to attend Howard University or New York University for medical school to become a pediatrician.

Though the college admissions process is not the main issue, the idea that teenagers should have this all figured out is.

We barely just turned 18 and are already deciding what career we want for essentially the rest of our lives.

"It's a scam ... It is insane (that) there are literal children signing apartment leases for college," Brown said.

While some of us are able to handle that much responsibility, I still find it incredible that it's presumed we have to do that.

Granted, at this school, we are lucky enough to have

conscientious counselors and Mia McFadden as our BRACE Advisor. Some of us are also able to receive insightful advice and support from trusted individuals to help this transition in our lives.

The financial aspect of college admissions is also incredibly ridiculous; to have teenagers pay thousands of dollars just to learn. (The whole capitalist/classist argument about education is a whole other conversation though.)

"The expectation for us to pay large amounts of money for something this early on in life when we are not yet financially stable or knowledgeable on how to go about getting funding, scholarships, etc. is absurd," Neish said. "It leads to a downward spiral of debt which can affect people for their lives."

Although some websites make applying for scholarships easier, such as bold.org and fastweb.com, it still takes time to fill out each form and write essays.

Many essay prompts ask students to write about personal stories that at times seem too intimate. For example, one would ask students to recount a time in their lives when they were really struggling and how they've overcome it.

I sincerely wish that seniors enjoy their transition from high school to whatever they decide to do next. We all have our own definitions of success and I hope that we all achieve them, regardless of others' opinions and journeys.

Don't feel rushed; work at your own pace and know that what you're doing is good enough. You are good enough.