

Jane Oles

Levine 7

An invisible pathogen is shaking the country to its core, disrupting the flow of normal life in ways that make you reminisce over mundane moments you wouldn't normally blink an eye at—studying with a friend, stopping by the neighbors to say hello, or visiting family on the other side of town. As our local community and our nation more broadly continue to experience a pandemic, we are not only reminded of the differential impact it has on people, but also the importance of solidarity with our community in pushing through it. Last week, as I finished up my classes for the day, I saw that I had a text message from my classmate. She said that she wasn't sure if she'd be able to finish our Sociology class with her job on the line and while juggling the care of her toddler son. I told her that I was sure this time was difficult and that I was there for her for whatever she needed. She knew that the words were more symbolic than anything, as the help she really needed now was not possible while social distancing. Still, the sentiment was there, and with it, the support. She's continued to show up to class, and I'm inspired every time I see her log on. This time more than any other has reminded me that a successful community student is more than making good grades. The successful community student not only completes their work but is driven to do so, and is driven by a sense of deeper purpose—to take care of themselves and to contribute to their community. As I've seen with my classmate, these obstacles are sometimes different than those that most students may face. It has never been more apparent or relevant than right now to practice a positive outlook. If we only acted in our own interest, it would negatively impact many others. When we act to benefit the broader community, we lift ourselves up as well, and to me, the successful community student is driven by this. In the midst of a pandemic and beyond, there is a symbiotic relationship between the success of the individual and the success of community. Successful community students will not only align their actions with their values, but they also share a common value with each other: supporting and growing those around them for the better. The students I interact with vary in age, in background, and in experience. Many of us tell unfamiliar stories, but many of us share one thing in common: our sense of place. We are all members of our community, a place where we reside, go to school, and live. We continue on with our shared education into an uncertain time, and we take what we learn in our classes and think about how we'll apply that to our future. That is what separates the good students from the successful community students. Success begins with the confidence in yourself to do well. Prioritizing your mental and physical health prepares the body and mind up to achieve success. That is why taking care of yourself is equally as important as taking care of school work. Actively controlling the mentality of your consciousness to be positive and driven will translate into reality. Relatedly, the Thomas Theorem states that the interpretation of a situation causes the reaction and actions are determined by our subjective perspectives. Being a successful student looks different for everyone. My goal to practice clinical work for those sick and injured as a Physician's Assistant could be very different from my classmates. Our success is a journey intimately tied to those around us, so the definition of success is defined situationally. For some of us, being successful in these times will mean having enough food for the week, for others it will mean completing online classes early so siblings can use the computer, and for others it will simply mean keeping up with our work as usual to get the grades we want. So what makes a successful community student? There is no single answer. Success is a personal interpretation, journey, and mindset that translates to everyone's life in a unique way. Even in a time that is devastating for many, the successful community student drives on, acknowledging her own challenges, practicing compassion for others (whether through a quick reply to a text or otherwise), and focuses ahead on how to use the present to better herself and those around her in the future.