

First Semester According to Freshmen

Zhaire Roberson, staff writer

This year's freshmen knew going in that their first semester would be unlike any other they had gone through. Millions of students across the country have had to readjust their styles of learning as they shift their focus from classrooms to computer screens. According to all four students (Sydney Lopez, Jumana Al Mulhim, Temnesera Mekonnen, and Olivia Thomas), getting acclimated to this year's learning style has been an adjustment.

Although almost all courses have been moved online, Biology 101 is one of the few on-campus lab classes offered at PVCC now.

"My favorite class would probably be the in-person lab portion of biology. It's the only in-person class I have where I can meet new people and do fun experiments," said Sydney Lopez, a recent Albemarle High School graduate and first-year at PVCC.

To reach graduation requirements and obtain the necessary credit hours, some students are still taking as many classes as they can this semester. Lopez is enrolled in four classes this semester.

"I feel like high school prepared me for attending a community college in terms of the



Sydney Lopez, a first-year student

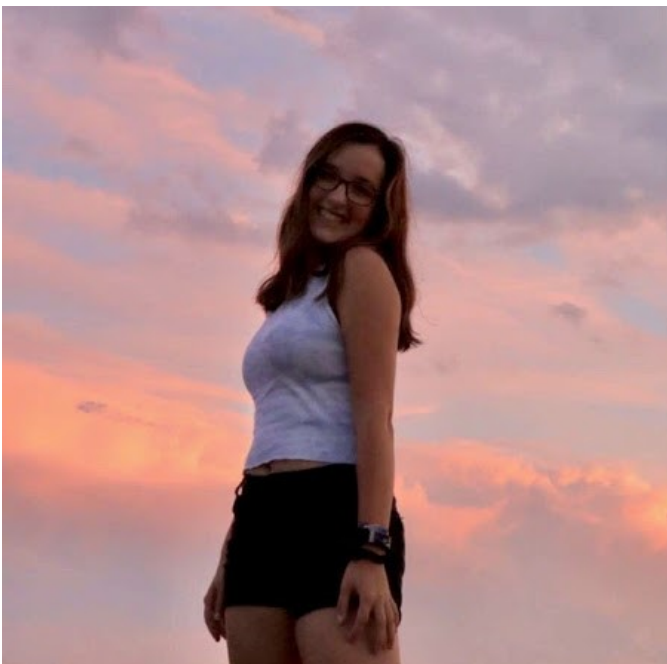
workload. I took both AP and dual enrollment classes. I'd say I spend an average of 14 hours per week doing homework," she said.

All four students mentioned the difficulty of making friends and establishing relationships with their peers and professors this semester.

"It's easier to make friends with someone in person, for me, because I get to learn who they are before I meet the online version of themselves. That can be completely different than who they actually are," Lopez said.

Lopez sympathized with professors saying, "This year is a big adjustment for many professors who are not used to teaching online, so I assume it's more stressful than usual and harder to connect with students due to this."

In recent months, many students have had a hard time making the adjustment from high school to college. College-goers are finding it hard to gauge the expectations of their professors and are not used to having all of their classes online. One of these students is Olivia Thomas. Thomas is a recent graduate of Albemarle High School and a first-year student at PVCC.



Olivia Thomas, a freshman

“The transition for me, personally, from high school to college has been very hard, not only because all the classes are online but also because [I have] to navigate new teaching styles and learn what teachers expect of their students,” Thomas said, “High school did prepare me for community college, in the sense that there was going to be a lot of work, but the time management piece was not really trained.”

When asked how she would describe this new way of learning, Thomas said, “If I had to choose one word to describe online classes this year it would be complex. Each teacher has the information for their students to access in different spots. Everything they assign comes with its own challenges.”

Despite the challenges, students like Thomas consider their freshman year to be unique and continue to preserve.

Though many students have had a difficult time transitioning from an in-class learning environment to online learning, there are still students who thrive under pressure and embrace the changing and unpredictable atmosphere. Jumana Al Mulhim is one of these students. Al Mulhim is a first-year Liberal Arts major who graduated from Albemarle High School this summer. Al Mulhim has stepped out of her comfort zone to find ways to be social with others. “I’ve been building relationships through club activities,” she said. “Not seeing people in



Jumana Al Mulhim, a Liberal Arts Major

person is a strange experience for me, but I feel like I am strangely comfortable with everything at the moment.”

Like her peers, Al Mulhim took rigorous classes in high school which prepared her for community college.

“I definitely think high school prepared me well. I took a total of 11 AP classes, and I think that helped me a lot in terms of knowing how to analyze well and write critically.” said Al Mulhim.

Like Lopez, Thomas, and Al Mulhim, Temensera Mekonnen is not afraid to go against the tide when it comes to embracing unpredictability. Mekonnen is a first-year Business major and a graduate of William Monroe High School. Mekonnen has set her sights on staying optimistic this semester. “The upside is definitely getting to work from any location. If anything, I prefer college.” Mekonnen said. “This is a new environment for all of us, including the professors. We are all learning to work together.”



Temnasera Mekonnen, a business major