

Tradition
by: Rachel Gist

We laughed at what the possibilities of things that could go awry this semester. Through our 3 years at Taylor, it seemed to be a tradition each year that an event would challenge campus. We made it though the 2016 election, underground newspapers, and much debate about a commencement speaker for our friends in the class before us. What would the challenge be this year? Whatever it is, we are the class of 2020. We can take it.

Traditions are a big deal at Taylor. Each one of them not only brings us closer as a campus, but they seem to build every year. From the school wide traditions that are the buzz on campus all week, to the wing traditions that are not to be spoken of, they have a special place in our hearts. This year, I was excited to be a part of planning many of Taylor's big traditions including Airband. As we brainstormed, we wanted this year to be huge. We had big ideas and they were falling into place. My team was ready to go all in. We watched tryouts, and we were excited for the rest of the campus to cheer these teams on in a few weeks for the 36th Olympic-themed Airband!

During tryouts a thought crossed my mind: this could be the last time that these teams perform this dance they have been working on for months. Coronavirus was new but frequently discussed in the conversations of many around campus. To be honest, it seemed as though the virus was ALL that was talked about. COVID-19 rang from every TV, Instagram post, conversation, and classroom. Everyone seemed to know someone who knew someone that was high up in an organization that said, "We are being sent home" or "The state borders are closing tomorrow" or "It will be over next week". It was hard to know what was truth. Each week, I hear, "They say this will be the worst week." "Who is 'they,'" I wondered quite often, because "they" never seem to have the right week.

One night emails were refreshed over and over waiting for what the provost would say. Some found it funny to yell, "Check your email" and watch the panic in the eyes of all who pulled out their phones quickly to discover nothing. When the email came in, I felt relief that at least we had direction. We were given less than a week to go to class, pack up, and go home, that is, if we could. Those last days our apartment was full of people talking, laughing, and sharing food. We never wanted to leave because we did not know if we could come back to this place we love. Little homework was done and tears were shed. This was heartbreaking for me. It seemed to rain that whole week and rumors commencement being postponed started to circle. I remember telling a friend that I felt "right on track" for being ready to leave Taylor. I was not ready for this.

Why does the cancelation and even postponement of events hurt so badly? I believe it is the notorious intentional community. I know, cringe. But we all know it is true. Taylor has been a place where we have cultivated so many relationships that we have learned to love through the little and big events of life. These people are the ones that we ran to when we got asked on pick-a-dates, vented to when the class dropped our GPA a little more than we hoped, got into our dream graduate school, or leaned on when we received news that knocked us to our knees.

There were so many dreams that I had for this year that had not yet happened. I wanted these traditions to happen because I love to celebrate with these people. We still do not know when we can celebrate together. But until then, we create new ways to celebrate and mourn together. Quarantine gives time for letter writing, longer texts, FaceTimes, and the newly discovered Zoom. Over these calls, we create new rhythms as we spread out all over the world after finishing classes. For all these things, I am thankful because they are paving the way for what is coming. There is still so much unknown, but we lean on God's faithfulness and know that the Taylor Community is not defined by geography.