

## ROBERT HALL IV--WRIGHT STATE STUDENT

### SUMMARY

Robert Hall IV (Robby), a mechanical engineering student at Wright State University, speaks about how being a student has prepared him for the future by forcing him to adapt to change and use all his knowledge, skills, and tools to re-learn how to learn. Being a student during the COVID-19 pandemic has been anything but easy. Looking into the mind of a current student will give insight on how the future of the working world will look based on what the coronavirus pandemic has taught them. Being a student on its own is a full-time occupation that can seem merciless in times where survival is critical. Robby talks about how collaborating with students, learning new technology, and the support of his college has helped him not only survive, but thrive in a time where most are trying to get by.

### INTERVIEW CONVERSATION

**Josie:** Happy to see a fellow student after many semesters of only talking to people over Zoom! I am also a student at Wright State, but I wanted an honest, unbiased discussion on how the coronavirus pandemic has affected your education and if you feel like it has served you any benefits. I also wanted to dive in on the troubles you faced during these times and if you feel like your education will be the same again. You can start whenever you're ready.

**Robby:** I am also happy to see people again. Initially, when the pandemic started, it halted the progress of my Spring 2020 semester. With educators adjusting to teaching online, learning in an untraditional classroom setting disrupted my learning pattern making it extremely difficult to retain critical information relating to course topics and major requirements. It was also difficult because the pandemic created a divide between educators and peers that made it more difficult to learn and collaborate. Being able to work with other students in class not only allowed me to better understand the material, but also provided motivation to complete schoolwork and strive for success.

**Josie:** I feel that pain 100%. I can't believe I've made it this long learning this way. Do you feel that while the pandemic has made things difficult for you that you were able to gain anything from it?

**Robby:** I would say that the pandemic has forced teachers and the school to progress to a more technologically advanced state that better suits my major as a mechanical engineer. For example, the ability to revisit recorded lectures for review and complete schoolwork at my convenience has helped me manage my time better and complete work at a more efficient rate.

Being able to successfully maneuver online software is critical in my future career. The pandemic also forced me to prioritize my mental health due to

the continued enforcement of staying at home and reducing the spread of the coronavirus. I am able to visit my family in Cincinnati more often and work at my part time job to help pay for my tuition.

**Josie:** As a student, do you feel as if you were equipped with a specific set of strategies, skills, or tools that specifically guided your survival through our current pandemic?

**Robby:** While it has been hard to be a student, I do feel like it has served me some benefit. As a college student, Wright State has served its obligation to provide for all of its students through financial support, mental health guidance, and the continual reminder of togetherness through the storm. Having a state recognized institution allows for direct covering by the country and state, which non-students would not receive. Being a student also puts in a position to have faculty-based resources that other adults my age don't have. Having mentors during a global crisis has been super helpful in understanding the situation happening right now and being able to adapt as needed. Adapting and going with the flow is important right now because things continue to change.

**Josie:** Do you think your education will ever be the same again? Do you feel like you've missed out on a lot of key experiences that alumni in the past have been able to get?

**Robby:** Education will definitely change both for the good and the bad. Positively, the technology has progressed, and teachers are now better equipped to teach in a more modern setting. Their growing knowledge on the use of technology is important in innovating the learning experience and providing class material in a way that better fits the need of the student. The professors are also prepared to provide numerous resources towards students that they did not know existed before the pandemic.

In addition, the campus is now improved to a state where the health of students and faculty is not compromised while still being able to continue the traditional classroom setting. In the terms of missing out on college experiences, I feel like it has taken, and will continue to take, experiences that are characterized by college life. My college experience is much different than that of my parents and will be different for future generations. I feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a gap in time that no other generation will experience. Makes you feel special in a way.

**Josie:** Overall, do you feel that you were able to successfully thrive during these times or just scraping by in order to survive?

**Robby:** Honestly, I think that it's a little bit of both. Initially, the first stretch of the pandemic was just trying to finish out the semester and get through to the summer. As the pandemic progressed, I feel that I was able to adapt and push through to a state of self-propelled achievement. With the course of the pandemic and stretches of being alone, times of struggle were natural in order to get through to times of momentary peace. At this point, I feel that I am making the most of the situation and am fully adapted to

learning online. I just hope that when things return in person, I'll be able to take what I have learned and use it to adjust back to the new normal.

**Josie:** I also wish for a return to a semi-normal state, but I am fairly happy with the way things have played out so far. With vaccines rolling out, we should return to some comfort soon. Thank you for your time and I hope you have a great summer!