

Rolla in the COVID-19 Pandemic

By March 2020, people in the United States realized that the coronavirus outbreak in China had become a worldwide pandemic. The number of COVID-19 cases began to rise in New York and several other states, and the fear of this deadly new virus spread faster than the virus itself. Even in states with few cases, such as Missouri, schools cancelled classes or moved them online, and cities and towns issued stay-at-home orders.

To curb the spread of the virus among students, Missouri S&T cancelled its annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations in mid-March. Many students were upset by this decision. "I was personally disappointed because it was going to be my first ever St. Patrick's Day at S&T," said Joy Amponsah, a graduate student in technical communication from Ghana. A few weeks later, though, the gravity of the situation sank in when S&T moved all its classes online and sent most students home.

The public schools in Rolla moved their classes online as well, and the Rolla City Council issued a stay-at-home order. Residents were supposed to stay at home from April 6 to May 11, except when they were engaged in "essential activities."

Most stores in Rolla implemented health-safety measures, such as mask requirements, and reduced their hours of operation. Some had to close temporarily



Mary Russell

because they relied on Missouri S&T students for their business. Many people worked from home; some were furloughed or laid off.

During the lockdown, there were fewer cars on the streets and highways in Rolla. When people did go out, they usually wore masks, and they stopped shaking hands with friends. Commodities such as toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer were in short supply.

Mary Russell, a graduate student in technical communication from Columbia, MO, stayed in Rolla during the lockdown. "The major change in my routine was not going to campus on a daily basis to attend classes."

Agaba Ame-Oko, another graduate student in technical communication, had moved from Nigeria to Rolla in December 2019, so he was just getting used to Rolla before the pandemic. During the lockdown, he began wearing a mask and practicing social distancing. Stores such as Walmart and Kroger had fewer

hours of operation, but he was still able to buy what he needed.

Before the pandemic, Dr. Ed Malone used to go to Panera every day for two or three hours to drink coffee and grade assignments. The coronavirus put an end to this daily ritual, and from late March until early August, he seldom left his house. He turned his dining room into an office and taught his classes from there.



Agaba Ame-Oko