

## Starting Your Freshman Year During A Pandemic

Auburn University student Anaston Ragsdale recently started her first year of college during a pandemic

By Sydney Brown

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Most first-year college students expect to have typical college experiences like partying, football games, and classes on campus. However, Anaston Ragsdale didn't know she would be starting her freshman year during a global pandemic.

Ragsdale is 18 years old from Georgia and starting her first year of college two hours away from home on campus during a pandemic.

"The pandemic has made my freshman year unique with most classes online," said Ragsdale. "This has made making friends and socializing hard."

When asked for three words that describe herself, Ragsdale said, "motivated, inclusive and social."

"Besides socializing being hard online classes have been amazing. I feel more motivated than ever, and I am getting m my work done".

A big part of the college experience is meeting new people, making friends, and socializing. But, as many have noticed, being social during a pandemic can be very hard with all the restrictions.

Starting a new school can be tricky even in the best circumstances, and Covid-19 has made it hard, but there have also been some bright spots.

When asked what Ragsdale was looking forward to most this year, she had one answer: Football.

"Football was a significant part of Auburn and being able to experience it during a pandemic has created some normalcy in my college experience," Ragsdale said. "I wanted to be able to experience a tradition at Auburn and being able to experience Auburn football has helped with not only the transition but the socializing aspect of college."

As to what she was not looking forward to this year, she had just three words, "The Haley Center."

"I will never understand how to get around the Haley Center; the place is like a maze. But unfortunately, the pandemic has made it, so I have no classes in the Haley Center, and for that, I am thankful because I don't think I would ever be able to find it".

Finding bright spots during an unfortunate situation is Ragsdale's many talents.

As Ragsdale settled more into Auburn, she started to see more of the place she visited when choosing what college to attend.

"As the semester progressed, I have started to see all the reasons why I picked Auburn," said Ragsdale. Auburn started to feel like a home away from home, that was not too close and not too far, like a place I could establish myself as an independent person and still have fun". Auburn not only offered Ragsdale a sense of security and home, but it provided her with a multitude of options major-wise.

"Picking a major was always going to be difficult because not only do I not know what I want to do, but because of our current situation, I want to be able to find a job when I graduate."

After browsing all the possibilities, Ragsdale came across Public Relations. This appealed to her because of the many different job options she would explore with this major.

While looking for a major to choose, Ragsdale stumbled across the minors list and found the best news. Auburn offered a minor in photography.

"Ever since middle school, I have loved taking pictures, but it wasn't until I went on my 8th grade D.C. trip that I knew I had to make photography a part of my career someday," Ragsdale said.

Ragsdale took a picture of the Washington Monument at Sunset when a fellow photographer walked up to her and told her that her photo was amazing. She went on to say to her about a photography contest that Ragsdale should enter the image into.

"Long story short, I entered the photo and won the contest."

From then on, photography became a big part of Ragsdale's life, creating her own photography business and later minoring in it.

Majoring in Public Relations and minoring in photography, Ragsdale was on the right track to eventually work in either the photography or Public Relations department for her favorite sports team: The Atlanta Braves.

"The Braves have been a part of my life forever. However, with majoring in Public Relations and minoring in photography, I am that much closer to achieving my goal of working for the Braves."

For now, Ragsdale plans to join a photography club and continue with her classes at Auburn, focusing more on the sports side of Public Relations, which she has been able to do even during a pandemic.

"The pandemic has made everything a bit different than I thought it would be, but I am still confident that I will be able to have my college experience," Ragsdale said. "I am grateful for the

friends I have made and for the facility that has given me the option to pursue my dream even if it is during a pandemic. Weirdly, the pandemic has given me a whole new perspective on life and school, and I am grateful for that."