

Kariem Hashem

Diaries on Corona Fears

(2)

19 March 2020

One question occupies my mind throughout the entire day: do I return to the United Arab Emirates and continue online/ distance learning there, or do I remain at the University of Illinois campus. I have just received the E-Mail asking all who can evacuate to do so, and what I thought would not have to be a question I myself face is now the primary one I must tackle. The list of factors that affect this decision are endless, and the number of possible consequences, all potentially disastrous, are endless as well. I pride myself in being able to contain emotion at times of high stress and volatility, but today I panicked; I excuse myself for this, quickly recuperate, and begin weighing out both options. On one hand, remaining on campus means that I would still have access to facilities such as the library, would not have to worry about a possible border closing within the U.A.E, would not have to worry about differing time-zones, and would be in the quintessential environment for academic study, unlike the potentially distracting apartment where I reside in the U.A.E. On the other hand, a swift return to the U.A.E would also mean that I avoid possible border issues on the U.S side, would be with my family at this time of distress, would be able to spend Ramadan alongside them, would be able to access immediate healthcare and psychological support if I contracted the virus, and would not have to worry about moving back come May, if border issues/ pandemic crisis were to persist until then. Nevertheless, after consulting friends, family, and deeply reflecting on the matter, I decided to stay on campus, as it had the least possible irregularities as well as the lowest reaction potential to “black swans”, unexpected events that could arise. What is certain right now is uncertainty, and my ability to deal with uncertainty on campus is far stronger than my ability to do so at a 9-hour time zone difference.