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Lessons Learned

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Tuesday, April 12th, 2022

Lessons Learned

Elizabeth Vear, 2023 Cohort

I can easily say that the most important thing I have learned is from those around me. Before I even attended UD, I heard of Rivers Institute on a tour and was immediately eager to get involved with it once I committed. I interviewed, and got accepted in the program in early 2020, but as we all know, Covid disrupted this. My cohort got welcomed into River Stewards during quarantine in April of 2020. I was so excited to work with my cohort for the next three years but had no clue of what that would entail when a pandemic was dominating our lives. Our first semester and second semester of sophomore year was solely on zoom. At the time, I struggled to find my sense of belonging in this cohort, as most of us struggled to feel any depth in relationships built over zoom. At the end of my sophomore year, I felt defeated in the sense I had not been able to see any of these people in person, but hopeful for the next year. Finally, as we rolled into junior year, we had finally reached a stage where we were able to meet in person, and it was like starting all over again. Here we were, going into our second year of being a cohort, and yet it felt like our orientation was our first time truly meeting.

This year and semester have been a foundational moment of strengthening relationships within the cohort. It is impossible to ignore how Covid impacted our beginning, but I believe we as a cohort grew closer from it and learned so much from each other. I look around and know that I have formed a relationship with each person in my cohort. Which may not seem like a momentous feat, but knowing the journey we have been on, it truly is. Shifting from zoom strangers to a strong cohort was a dramatic shift, but it was necessary for the work that we do. Continuously learning about the Stews around me continues to amaze me, as we are each so unique and bring such different perspectives to the table. As I continue to learn about the people in this program, I am that much more confident in our abilities and dedication to our projects. One of the most beneficial ways to learn is from those around you, and I have learned so much from the people in Rivers Institute. Rivers Institute is not what it is without the strength of relationships within each cohort, and I can happily say each person in it has taught me so much.