

CORRECTION: In last week's edition of The Herald, in the story "Some students voice their anger about return to campus," the active case total at the University of Arkansas should have read 222 cases after the U of A's most recent report at the time from Monday, Aug. 31.

DEAN, CONTINUED

"It really hasn't significantly impacted me," Jones-Branch said. "I have been here most days on campus working. Most of my interaction with students has been either telephone, email or virtual. I've been able to do what I need to do without having a lot of personal interaction with students. Of course I miss that part of it, but under the circumstances it's necessary."

Before the pandemic broke out, Jones-Branch attended the Council on Southern Graduate Schools and she met with graduate deans from around the South.

Despite other events moving to a virtual setting, Jones-Branch still had interaction with graduate school

deans from many different institutions during the summer.

The new dean's summer remained busy as she also held bi-weekly meetings with Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Dr. Karen Wheeler to stay up to date with graduate school processes.

"I didn't want to wait until July 1 to know about them," Jones-Branch said. "She let me know about things that were going on, she let me know about what my responsibilities would be and some of the people I could talk to to get certain kinds of things handled. That happened off and on every other week since early March. That was extremely helpful so I wasn't completely at a loss when

I officially began on July 1."

Jones-Branch established a focus on recruiting students as well. The school plans to participate in six virtual graduate school fairs this semester and one of those fairs will be on the campus of A-State. The graduate school worked on finding new ways to welcome students to campus that would help students feel at home right away.

"One of the things we would like to do is develop some sort of welcome package so the student gets something that immediately begins to tie them to the university," Jones-Branch said. "Whether that's an A-State mask, a little packet with some graduate school items in it that graduate students use,

we want to make sure they get something more than an email."

The new dean stressed the importance of making graduate students want to attend A-State, but also wanting to make sure those students get to campus and do great.

"We not only want them to survive, we want them to do more than that, we want them to thrive while at Arkansas State University," Jones-Branch said.

The school also created ways to help graduate students get prepared for the professional world.

The program plans to help graduate students write a CV or curriculum vitae.

Jones-Branch did not know how to write those documents

when she was in graduate school, so she looks to help current students, with the help of the office of career services, complete those important documents. With graduate assistantships on the minds of students and the uncertainty in the air about many aspects of college life because of COVID-19, Jones-Branch had to keep an open door and open mind to help her students.

The new dean stressed the importance of being flexible and nimble.

"To keep in mind and to help students keep in mind, we have not been in this moment before," Jones-Branch said. "At least most of us have not been in this moment before. There

are some things we just can't know because we haven't done it before. What we do know is Arkansas State University is very good at working with the students and trying to find ways to make sure they have the best possible educational experience."

Challenges moving forward center around adapting to doing things virtually that would usually be done in person.

"I, like everyone else, have had to pivot to doing things virtually," Jones-Branch said. "But I also think that the more we do that, the more normal it becomes. This is the moment that we're in and I think for the moment we need to adapt and figure out how to work with it even when it's uncomfortable."

INTERNATIONAL, CONTINUED

Her ambition is to go into broadcast journalism. Yoshika was not able to go back to Japan over the summer due to travel restrictions by the U.S. and Japanese governments. She is also concerned if she does go back to Japan, she may not be able to return to the United States and complete her education.

Initially, Yoshika says Japan had a more gentle lockdown than the United States. Her opinion is that the Japanese government is more concerned with the economy than with the pandemic. However, she states that businesses in Japan have taken certain measures which encourage social distancing. For example, she said that her father's company allowed him to work from home for a period. Also, his company has split up the hours for their employees so the workplace is not as crowded.

At present, Japan is seeing a spike in cases of COVID-19. This is a troubling trend to Yoshika. She is also concerned the U.S. government may send her home. She mentioned that Donald Trump threatened to send all international students home if their respective schools go completely online and stop in person classes. However, President Trump rescinded this policy in July due to heavy opposition from prominent universities.

Arvind Bikaner is from Northwest India. He is studying agriculture at A-State. He is an individual who is keeping



Photo by: Eric McGee | News Writer

International students (from left to right) Yixing Wang, Yoshika Shibata and Arvind Bikaner have had to deal with the coronavirus over the spring, summer and fall away from home while attending A-State.

his options open. Arvind is open to working in agriculture in either the U.S. or India. He started attending school at A-State in the spring of 2020 so he had no intention of going home during the summer.

Arvind says that, unlike the U.S., India had an absolute shutdown. Initially, he said this created a plethora of problems for the country. Arvind

emphasized that there is a large amount of severe poverty in India, especially in the urban areas. He elaborated by saying that most of the poor in India live from hand to mouth. That is, they purchase their food on a daily basis. The complete shutdown initially caused an interruption in the food supply for the less advantaged.

The interruption in the

food supply did not last long. According to Arvind, India pulled together to address the problems associated with the lockdown. Wealthy businessmen in the country formed NGOs which ensured everyone had access to food. The government also ensured that every citizen received some form of financial assistance. Also, the population followed

government instructions which helped stem the tide of Covid cases. Arvind says "In India, when the government says to do something, you do it."

Arvind says he is not too concerned about his family. He explained that his father is a farmer so he is fortunate in that he is self sufficient. However, because of the

shutdown, his father had problems with accessing cash due to the banks being shut down. At present, India is seeing a serious spike in cases since the lockdown was lifted.

Yixing Wang is from the Xhi Jing Province in coastal southern China.

He is studying computer science at A-State. Yixing says, like Arvind, he was not planning on going home over the summer. He is not planning on going home at least until next year. Like Yoshika, he is very much concerned that he will not be able to finish his education due to the pandemic.

Yixing is not happy with his government's response to the coronavirus.

He says that the government initially suppressed the truth about the severity of the pandemic. He says his government censored the media so the truth did not get out. Ultimately the Chinese government had to impose a severe shutdown. Yixing says individuals were allowed to leave their houses only once a week and the government severely enforced the restrictions.

Yixing has some concern about his family.

He is mainly concerned about his grandmother who, like many Americans, has a defiant attitude towards wearing a mask. He is not too concerned about his mother because she works for the government.

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