I’ll always remember late night paper revisions and lecture viewing party sessions with my learning pod from Education Policy Analysis with Professor Reimers. We always started off doing work, but then ended up doing something totally unrelated — heading on a Target run in Texas, talking about the latest gossip from WeChat in China, or watching my dog dress up in different sweaters in the “cold” California winter. All three of us were based in different time zones and were also working while taking classes, so we had to get creative with our meeting times, but we always ended up having fun regardless of the hour!

I am a part-time student living in Princeton, New Jersey. I will always remember the friendly relationships I have made with my professors, in spite of never meeting in person. It’s amazing how a view into a person’s home office with passing pets or children can help you feel connected over the miles!

In the fall, I took a course taught by Eileen McGivney, The Virtual Self: Identity, Culture, and Learning in Digital Worlds. My peers and I received VR headsets, and we had multiple opportunities to interact with each other in various virtual worlds. Although I was unable to physically meet my classmates on the Harvard campus this year, these interactions in virtual reality and the advancements in avatar design provided me with the opportunity to connect with my peers in an innovative and remarkable way.

This past semester, I was enrolled in Dr. V’s Ethnic Studies class and I’ll remember the Ethnic Studies Symposium. While we could not attend physically, my family, friends, and current/former students attended our presentation which, for me, became a more impactful experience.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER THE MOST FROM THIS BIZARRE YEAR OF LEARNING VIRTUALLY?

Melanie Shimano, Ed.M. (TIE)
BALTIMORE

Julia Steinberg, Ed.M. (HDP)
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Jessica O’Donnell, Ed.M. (TIE)
TORONTO

April Flores, Ed.M. (EPM)
BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS
I will miss being able to sleep in until one minute before my morning class starts and calling in from the comforts of my bed.

I’m a first-year Ph.D. student. One of the most memorable parts of this year of virtual learning was getting together on Zoom every Monday evening with my reading group for one of our required courses. We were supposed to be discussing our readings and sharing notes, which we did, but only after checking in personally, sharing updates about baby panda Xiao Qi Ji at the National Zoo, and posting funny memes for about an hour. Having this unstructured time to laugh and connect during this strange year was one of the highlights of the fall for me. (Shout out to my reading group: Caroline, Julian, Lily, and Kemy!)

Friends Who Zoom

What inspires us? More often than not, it’s the people around us. At the end of last year, the school’s centennial, more than a dozen alumni and faculty gathered in pairs and trios on Zoom to talk about the important friendships they developed with one another over the years, friendships that offered mentoring and opportunities for the exchange of intergenerational knowledge. The Zoom series, called CrossGen, was taped and can be accessed online. Conversations included:

- GEOFFREY CANADA, ED.M.’75 and CLINT SMITH, PH.D.’20, (shown above) talked about educational equity, the impact of COVID-19, and what inspired them to become teachers.
- PROFESSOR SUSAN MOORE JOHNSON, ED.D.’81, MATTHEW KRAFT, ED.D.’13, and HEATHER PESKE, ED.D.’05, shared how they connected through the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers and the way research and policy support teaching.
- SENIOR LECTURER JAMES HONAN, ED.D.’89, and RICHARD REDDICK, ED.D.’07, talked about their collaboration on the Institute for Educational Management and how the Ed School has fostered generations of relationships.
- SENIOR LECTURER KATHRYN BOUDETT, PROFESSOR ELIZABETH CITY, ED.D.’07, and Professor Richard Murnane, the founders of the Ed School’s Data Wise Project, reminisced about the project’s growth over the last 20 years.
- EVE EWING, ED.M.’13, ED.D.’16, and PROFESSOR SARA LAWRENCE-LIGHTFOOT, ED.D.’72, talked about role models, their mutual admiration for one another, and the inheritances that have shaped their lives and life’s work.
- DENNIS HOLTSCHNEIDER, ED.D.’97, and SENIOR LECTURER JUDITH BLOCK MCLAUGHLIN, M.A.T.’71, ED.D.’83, exchanged observations about their careers, working with college presidents, and the life-long support they have received from their Ed School colleagues and one another.

Watch the conversations here: hgse.me/3v3d3DZ