March 16, 2020

**COVID-19: A WHOLE NEW TAKE ON THE WORDS “MARCH MADNESS”**

Man… I take a couple weeks off the Journal and the world falls apart!

When last I wrote, I asked for questions you might ask and got several interesting ones… more on those in a later edition. But COVID-19 has been the major malfunction recently and has caused the shutting down of in person classes at Miami. So instead of their regular schedule of being out and about campus, the guys are here just about all day. And every day there is a new announcement, a new change to the campus, and new challenges.

As of March 15 (Beware the Ides of March, Shakespeare!), all classes will be online for the balance of the semester and students in dorms have been encouraged to go home. In addition all restaurant and bars have been ordered closed. This makes both Oxford and the campus ghost towns and has cut our active members in the house and on campus by more than half. When left without structure, people either create their own or revel in the chaos. I’m afraid the latter is in play at the House…. the night of the online announcement was like a New Year’s Eve party!

The routines of meals have stayed about the same… we are reducing hours of service based on fewer guys, our Steward going home and needing to keep Jackie’s hours down. Our food service firm, Upper Crust, has been great to work with, but they are facing tough times… they specialize in fraternities and sororities, and when they aren’t cooking, they aren’t making money.

I understand guys heading home… we are only a week away from the “real” spring break, and many of the guys who were planning adventures down south have had to curtail those plans. For the guys that remain, there are fewer activities and events, and some of their classes have still not translated to online. So, there is a lot of time on their hands… and even their generational obsession with videos on their cell phone can’t fill that much time.

I’m going to leave my own thoughts on the response to COVID-19 out of this other than to say that life should go on, and fear of everything is no way to live… and I already miss March Madness! But with the guys, I fear their upbringing has not prepared them for this level of change and uncertainty. For the most part these are affluent, “suburban” kids who have enjoyed supportive parents, lots of opportunities and busy lives with lots of activities. I’m not surprised if they struggle to deal with “life put on hold”. It’s like the old proverb… “Idle hands are the Devil’s playground.” Let’s hope not… and it will be really interesting to see the impact of this crisis on Colleges in general. Stay tuned…

As always I will remove you from the list if so desired... stay safe...and wash your hands!