

What is “normal”? Whatever it is, it is certainly not this year at Miami University!

In my last Journal entry, I was almost paranoid because things were going so well... turns out I was right to think things could go wrong.

First of all, recall that the University delayed opening the residence halls but then released students from their dorm contracts to allow them to move uptown. This led to a 20-30% increase in off campus students... just in time for the State of Ohio to order all bars and restaurants to stop serving at 10 pm. A recipe for a quiet business district but definitely not for a quiet uptown Oxford.

Next, the University Fraternity office determined that all members living in off campus housing should “shelter in place” for 10 days... not supposed to allow visitors or leave their house unless absolutely necessary. So now 1800 or so of the 7000+ students uptown are subject to different rules than everyone else... and if you understand how college students think and “party”, this was a tough “ask”.

Then comes the City of Oxford establishing an ordinance where they can fine people for not wearing masks and / or for gathering in groups of over 10. You are all probably aware of what happened next. A group residence close to our house went “viral” over their “virus party”! Six students received tickets including an Honor Student who did not live in the party house who got a ticket that cost him his enrollment and scholarship... hardly seems fair for something that would not even have been noticed in “normal” times. (Note: The students are appealing... stay tuned!)

So we can all agree that things are far from “normal”. I understand the concern over the Coronavirus... I also understand that 20-somethings are not likely to be disciplined in their mask wearing or their social interactions. All of these events set up an untenable situation... if we were truly trying to protect everyone, campus would be totally empty. But I am also not a fan of living in fear...life goes on!

The guys in this House have done a pretty good job of following the rules. We have had our issues... some unnecessary damage and the “usual” weekend mess. More minor breakage than we would like (bottles and a couple chairs) but also a great deal of cooperation in cleaning up... our Sunday work crews have been great and for the most part the guys are showing more pride in the House.

They are also spending more time in the House. The newly restored basement has turned into a “workout room” (including some boxing enthusiasts) and the addition of an air hockey table (Thanks again, Brother Crawford!) has seen some much-needed action. At any time on any weekday you’ll find guys in the library, the front rooms and the dining room fully engaged in their online classes. And their added presence in the House shows up in ordering more disposable paper supplies.

All of this brings us to this week... the dorms are re-opening with 60% capacity and “hybrid” classes will start next week. Most classes will continue to be available online, many with in person options. The university is also requiring masks on campus, increased testing levels and providing isolation areas for those infected. But it’s a safe bet that the numbers of students infected will go up as well as the number of incidents where students will be cited and punished for violating the city and university rules.

All we can do is hope that our House and Brothers maintain their good efforts at following the rules and honoring the House. As of today, we don’t have a single in-House Brother who has tested positive... several living uptown have been positive and most have passed their quarantine period. For my part, I don’t spend as much time interacting with the guys as I used to... for example I’ll take some meals to my

room. I still try to keep a busy schedule including pickleball and golf... I would have said "normal" schedule, but in this strange semester that word hardly seems appropriate! Stay tuned!