

In Words

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COVID-19 Update March 16, 2020

Office of Communications

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Dear Kenyon Families,

We are all too aware that the COVID-19 landscape is changing rapidly. Cases have been reported in virtually every state, and the focus of public health policy has rapidly shifted in the last few days from containment to slowing the pace of the epidemic and lowering the density of cases. The Governor of Ohio and state agencies have issued orders broadly restricting many activities in the state, including gatherings, dine-in restaurants (which includes college dining halls), fitness centers and in-person voting. The Centers for Disease Control is also recommending no large gatherings. While no case has yet to be reported on our campus, we cannot in good conscience resume our residential program — indeed it would be impossible to do so — given the current realities and the interest of safety. We therefore have made the difficult but necessary decision to conduct the rest of the semester at a distance.

As you know, faculty have been preparing to resume classes next week through remote instruction, and that will continue as planned. In extending distance learning through the end of the semester, we have the added complication of reuniting students with their belongings as quickly and safely as possible. Our staff has been working around the clock [on a plan](#) that allows us to proceed without delay. I know you will have many questions, and we have tried to anticipate them in a set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#). We also have a team ready to field calls (740-427-5093, starting Tuesday, March 17, from 12:30 to 8:30 p.m. EDT; additional hours [are listed here](#)) and emails (covid19@kenyon.edu); if they cannot answer your question, they will connect you with someone who can. Finally, we are hosting two video conference calls: Tuesday, March 17, at 4:30 p.m. EDT and Wednesday, March 18, at noon EDT. Please use [this form](#) to register and submit questions for Kenyon's leadership team.

Many of you will have anticipated this news given the string of announcements made by colleges and universities in the last several days, as well as by officials at every level of government. But it is no less disappointing, especially for our seniors. A week ago we were hopeful that the Kenyon community would converge again on Middle Path this spring. Today it is clear that the best way to keep our students, faculty and staff well — as well as the broader public — is to keep one another at a distance. Such an idea feels strange to us at Kenyon, and antithetical to who we are.

At Kenyon, we talk a lot about what happens in our classrooms and the richness of our residential life, about the magic of our campus and the very human connection it inspires. But we are more than what our physical campus holds, and we know that our connection as a community will remain strong despite necessary distance. Indeed, crisis has a way of bringing a community together, of reminding us of the importance of self-sacrifice in order to help the community as a whole. I have been reminded of this throughout this week, as faculty have worked to re- envision teaching and learning, as students have checked in on one another from afar, as staff have strived to minimize disruption, and as a call for social distancing to protect the most vulnerable in our communities has taken hold across the world.

In these times, we are faced with the responsibility of making decisions in a rapidly shifting landscape. To do so, we will draw upon what Kenyon does best: learn from the lessons of history, apply the principles of science, and act with an empathy shaped by our study of the humanities and arts. We will strive to make decisions that optimize the common good. We will care for each other. We will make mistakes, but we will also be forgiving. We will, to paraphrase Marcus Aurelius, remember first and foremost to do the work of human beings. Please know that in these difficult times — especially in these difficult times — I remain ever grateful for all that you, the members of our community, do for Kenyon.

Sincerely,

Sean Decatur
President

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