

Dear Students, Parents, and Family Members—

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf has issued a stay-at-home order for those of us living and working in Centre County. The order takes effect at 8 pm on Saturday, March 28, and is designed to strongly reinforce the physical distancing that has been encouraged by public health experts for weeks. The Governor's order now covers 22 counties in the Commonwealth. Many of you were already affected by his action, and others among you might anticipate the likelihood of a similar order coming your way.

It becomes increasingly and critically important that all of us abide by the clear directive from public health officials to avoid unnecessary interactions with others outside our homes to the fullest extent possible. Governor Wolf's order and similar directives in other jurisdictions specifically cite key exceptions to this general rule. But beyond those few exceptions, social or physical distancing is imperative.

With that end in mind, I ask that those among you already in Centre County do all you must to abide by these restrictions. Your own safety and wellbeing, as well as the welfare of others, depend on it. I also ask that any among you who are contemplating a return to Centre County and State College reconsider that choice. Recent social media communications have suggested that many students are contemplating returning here, partly because it is viewed as a safe location. That hope is no longer realistic.

All of us are in this together, and all of us should expect each of our communities to be affected by this pandemic. "Happy Valley" is no refuge, nor is State College better equipped to respond to the anticipated overwhelming burden the pandemic will impose on local health care and other providers.

The return of more students to this small community would only invite precisely the social interactions we must all work intently to avoid. The virus seeks clusters of individuals who are willing to risk harm for the short-term gain of social interaction. We must not give it that chance.

For these reasons, **no recognized student organization at Penn State, including fraternities, may host any social gathering. Failure to honor this restriction in the interest of public health will risk loss of University recognition for the organization and disciplinary consequences for individuals involved.**

Please stay exactly where you are, if you can, and keep one another safe and well. You have my very best wishes and thanks, as we all work together to overcome this challenge, as Penn Staters always do.

Sincerely,

Damon Sims
Vice President for Student Affairs