
Regarding an unsafe party on campus last night

1 message

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Reply-To: msm8@williams.edu

To: WILLIAMS-ALL@listserv.williams.edu

Williams students (this is being copied to faculty and staff),

An estimated 80 to 100 people gathered for a party inside Wood House last night. When Campus Safety arrived on scene the attendees fled. CSS noted that many people at the party were either completely without masks or were wearing them around their necks, on their wrists, etc. As you can imagine, the crowd was tightly packed in such a small space.

This report is deeply disappointing to me. Before deciding to return to campus each of you signed a [community health commitment](#) in which you promised to follow the guidelines so that we could safely open and spend spring term on campus. Most students are abiding by that pledge: if you are among them, I am grateful to you.

If, however, you were involved in organizing last night's party, or if you attended for any period of time, I expect you to come forward and live up to your responsibility. All of us make bad decisions at times. But what we do in the aftermath matters.

Those who come forward voluntarily will be asked to complete the rest of the semester remotely, as set out in our public health [guidelines](#). That information may prompt some of you to consider not owning up. So I will also note that CSS is conducting its standard investigation of the incident. Anyone who has not come forward voluntarily by the end of that investigation, and who is later determined to have organized or attended the party, will also be transitioned to remote learning and will additionally be subject to our full conduct process.

That process may very well lead to disciplinary consequences, up to and including suspension.

You can contact anyone [on the Dean's team](#) to acknowledge your involvement, and they will work with you.

If this response seems strict, it has to be; the rules are in place to protect our community and the academic semester. And I remind you that each student knew and accepted the rules before you arrived. In fact, our local public health officials only endorsed the college's spring plan with that assurance.

I understand that students are tired of COVID preventing them from interacting with friends and peers. My own friends and relatives and I all feel impatient to see each other, too. If you are feeling exhausted or just need to connect with someone, I encourage you to turn to some of the many safe options available to you, including [Integrative Wellbeing](#), [the Dean's office](#) and the [Davis Center](#), the [chaplains](#), various [physical](#) and [creative](#) outlets and [student groups](#).

What we may *not* do in those circumstances is make choices that put people around us in danger. Those people include your fellow students, faculty, staff and community members—people you care about. The party was especially disrespectful of other residents in Wood House. So if you were involved, the responsible thing to do now is come forward, accept the consequences and try to make amends.

I have also decided that for public health reasons we will now postpone the planned move to Phase 2 of our campus COVID rules on Monday, which was announced in [yesterday's update](#). Specifically, we will not allow indoor socializing with non-podmates, requests for pod mergers, or athletic transportation, since it entails non-podmates traveling together in vans.

The change is not meant to punish the whole community, but rather as a necessary public health measure. The party created a significant risk of Covid transmission. Indeed, such gatherings have become superspreader events at other schools. So we are now going to have to monitor the situation. If we do not see evidence of viral spread during the next two weeks, we will tentatively plan to move into Phase 2 on March 15, instead.

I am truly sorry to everyone who has obeyed the rules and now has to wait longer for Phase 2, or worry about risk from last night's incident. You accepted your responsibility with good will and good humor. We have to honor that by protecting you and responding promptly when others act unsafely.

The fact that each person signed a pledge upon returning to campus played a crucial role in giving us the confidence to open safely. Last night's gathering undermined that confidence. If you were involved, I want you to step up and restore our faith in Williams' ability to safely offer an in-person education.

Maud