Dear Spartans,

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has announced a new epidemic order, effective Wednesday, Nov. 18, through Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020, limiting indoor residential gatherings to two households at any one time; bars and restaurants to outdoor dining, carry-out and delivery only; gyms (including IM West) to individual exercise with strict safety measures in place; and the closing of casinos, movie theaters and group exercise classes. This three-week “Pause to Save Lives” serves to continue mitigation techniques and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

Spartans have been following similar guidelines both on- and off-campus for months, for which I am very appreciative. This MDHHS epidemic order serves as a reminder to keep doing what you’re already doing – wearing face coverings, physically distancing, washing hands frequently – and seeks to limit social gatherings as cases rise in our state. The impact to your day-to-day lives on campus is minimal, but it may alter how you socialize for the next few weeks.

I understand that gathering in groups may feel safe, especially when we gather with those we trust, but it is still be incredibly risky – especially with the recent outbreaks we’re seeing in Michigan. If you must gather, MDHHS suggests gathering with only one other household over the next three weeks. That other household will become a part of your “social pod,” and you should all agree to limit in-person social activities to only each other.

This social pod system serves as a way to allow for socializing in the safest way possible, but I strongly urge you to consider whether gathering face-to-face is necessary at this time. I recognize that humans are social creatures, and we seek interactions with others, but we must reflect on whether in-person gatherings are truly essential. And for those Spartans planning to travel home for Thanksgiving, as courses will be fully remote, I urge you to stay home through the holiday season and not to return to East Lansing until the start of spring semester. As President Stanley noted, reducing travel and social gatherings is imperative right now, and we need all Spartans to do their part.

In order to protect each other, we must stick to our social pods over the next three weeks and follow these guidelines:

- **Continue to wear a face covering when in public.** Only take it off when you are actively eating or taking a drink, then put it back on.
- **Stay six feet apart from others.**
• **Limit your time indoors with others.** The longer the visit, the greater the risk of transmission.

• **Communicate immediately if anyone is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.** Many COVID-19 symptoms are similar to symptoms of the cold or flu; this is not the time to make assumptions. If anyone in the pod is sick, for any reason, the entire pod should stop socializing immediately, and the person with COVID-19 symptoms should get tested.

• **Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19** after a gathering. If anyone feels sick, get tested.

Thank you, Spartans, for doing what is necessary to keep yourself, other Spartans and your communities safe.

**Go Green!**

Vennie Gore  
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