

What were they thinking?

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus, Lehigh University February 20, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus* 

“Cases at Lehigh over the past week have increased the numbers of infections in the city.”

Reminiscent of the dreadful racist and sexist fraternity theme parties of yesteryear—

ref: **“The rise of cases in such a short period of time is nothing short of obscene”**

selections from Sarah M. Wojcik, “Lehigh University cracks down on ‘COVID Party’ during outbreak, could expel students.” Morning Call, February 19, 2021.

Lehigh University’s coronavirus outbreak has bloated Northampton County’s infection rate and led to fears that the campus may have to shut down, but officials say that hasn’t stopped some student groups from throwing parties.

The university cited three Greek fraternities — Alpha Tau Omega, Delta Upsilon and Chi Phi — with student conduct charges, alleging they threw parties or gatherings last week, according to [a notice posted on the university’s website](#).

One of those gatherings, according to the university’s notice, was a Feb. 11 off-campus “COVID Party” hosted by Chi Phi and attended by students who had recently tested positive for the coronavirus.

In a letter to the university’s undergraduate students, Vice President of Student Affairs Ricardo Hall said both on- and off-campus parties were quickly shut down, and the students and organizations are facing suspensions, evictions from university housing and even expulsions.

“The consequences are great because the stakes are high,” Hall wrote in the letter.

Even as these examples of bad behavior come to light, Hall emphasized that “the vast majority of students are doing everything they can to keep themselves and everyone around them safe, in hopes of eventually returning to a more ‘normal’ campus life.”

He pointed out examples of students at the campus who’ve been leaders in helping transform the culture around COVID-19, with the student government working to organize a council that would help bring forward possible solutions to these kinds of student-based issues.

Kristen Wenrich, director of the Bethlehem Health Bureau, said this week that cases at Lehigh over the past week have increased the numbers of infections in the city, and there seemed to be no other factors contributing to the rise.

Hall wrote that it’s understandable that students are frustrated and experiencing general “COVID fatigue,” but breaking the rules will only prolong the problem.

“We’ve seen time and again that when the protocols are followed, we see lower rates of infection,” he wrote. “Beyond the importance to health and safety, doing the right thing when it’s difficult — the actions we take today and tomorrow — also ultimately define our community. Thank you for doing your part and for expecting the same from others.”

selections from Sara k. Satullo, “Lehigh U. frat allegedly hosted ‘COVID party’ during campus outbreak. Expulsions possible.” lehighvalleylive, February 18, 2021.

[Lehigh University](#) is cracking down on students and groups throwing parties amid a [coronavirus outbreak](#) on its South [Bethlehem](#) campus.

There are currently 379 active coronavirus cases amongst Lehigh students and more than 600 in quarantine. The university’s test positivity rate jumped to 8% last week, prompting Lehigh to [urge student caution last Friday](#).

Yet, some students did not heed that message. At least three Greek organizations are facing student conduct charges for parties thrown in the last week, [according to the university's student affairs website](#).

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Lehigh's outbreak is contributing to [Northampton County](#) having the state's second highest per capita infection rate — 43 new cases per 100,000 people — over the past week. Northampton is averaging 132 new cases a day over the last seven days.

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