

Opinion

Opinion: What we want isn't what we need

Kaleigh White, Features Editor | May 11, 2020

Advertisement

I have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. It is a common disorder that many people have and don't realize, due to the seemingly commonplace symptoms. The best way to describe a person with OCD, in a general sense, is idiosyncratic. While the internet has certainly taken a toll on how OCD is viewed, making it seem like a joke or like it is something to be taken lightly, in reality, it is a series of idiosyncrasies that a person needs to do in order to feel okay in the world. It can be anything from tapping your right hand with your left, and your left with your right, or rubbing your fingers on your right hand a certain way and needing to rub your fingers on your left hand the exact same way, or counting your steps from here to there and everywhere, or a number of other things that can make life really tedious.

That all being said, I hate people touching my stuff. When I had a double my freshman year, I was absolutely through the roof at the thought of having a roommate. Thankfully, she did not come back for the spring semester, and I was so relieved to have my own space. I had a single this year, and I was at ease knowing no one could touch my stuff unless I let them in myself.

That all being said, I completely support the decision to have our things packed up by other people and stored or shipped. It is not that I am completely comfortable with my things being touched; in fact, I am needing my anxiety pills much more than I had before. It is not that I think they have a right to hold my belongings hostage in the first place; that was one of the first things I said to my brother, that it felt like my items were being ransomed. It's not even that I want to support this decision. I support it because I have to, and we all have to, if we want to come back this fall.

A teacher once put "struggles with authority" on my report card, so while it pains me to say this, the administration is right. Crawford County has thankfully seen an incredibly low number of COVID-19 cases. Bringing 1700 students to Meadville (the center of the county, location of county courthouses, one of two hospitals in the county (the other being in Titusville, and still owned by Meadville Medical Center) is not a good idea. Realistically, all 1700 students wouldn't need to come; 3% of Allegheny students aren't from America, and one of my friends told me that he took all of his stuff home already because he did not want to pay for shipping to South Korea. If we generalize and boldly assume that most of the international students

took the same precautions, and we take out 3% of the 1700 students, we're left with 1650 students. Of the students who live in the US full-time, approximately 50% are out-of-state, accounting for roughly 800 students. That's 800 students who would need to cross state lines in order to come pack up and move their own belongings. At this time, allowing Allegheny students to come from all over the country, possibly from places that are still high-risk, and bring their germs to Crawford County is a slap in the face to everyone that lives there and has been following guidelines to keep themselves safe. While this likely will not be the case in a month or two, as we are on a steady path to normalcy right now, at the present time, it is not feasible.

Logistically, if they were to let us pack and take home our own belongings, they would likely start with students who live in Pennsylvania. Doing the math, we find that there are approximately 900 students that live in Pennsylvania. That's 900 students in the first round alone. Gatherings are now limited to no more than 25. The maximum number of students that could theoretically be done in one day is 8; eight students, eight family members, eight faculty, one chicken with its head cut off. The faculty could probably rotate, so the fewest number of faculty members it would take is 16. That's 16 people that we are asking to come supervise students from all over the state, go back to their families, and keep coming back to do it again and again. That is a lot to ask of one person, let alone 16 (at the bare minimum). Furthermore, to get all 900 students in the first round done, presuming they started on May 14th, they would have to do this for 113 days. Even if they worked on weekends, they would not be done — with the first round, mind you — until Aug. 28, the first Friday of classes. It is simply not possible to safely and efficiently get everyone in and out and still come back to clean, sanitized rooms this fall. It feels unfair, but it is quite literally impossible. They did not make this decision to punish us, or just for funsies. There is no other option.

While I support the decision altogether, it is worth noting that I only did so after the announcement regarding shipping costs for students. The original decision to make students cover their own shipping costs was an extremely classist move. As someone who actively fights against classism on campus almost every day of my life, I was appalled that that was the initial decision. I was angry when I saw that we were expected to request emergency funds; if a global pandemic does not automatically constitute as an emergency, then what does? It was a low blow to already struggling families, and I am beyond grateful that the administration realized this glaring error.

Ponder this for a moment: what does President Link have to gain from making bad decisions? What reasoning would justify her angering the entire student body? There is no good reason why she would make this decision if it was not what was best for our community. People all over the world are making hard decisions. None are easier than others, and none are irrelevant to anyone, because at this point, hard decisions impact entire communities. This is not just about Allegheny. This is about Meadville, Crawford County, the state, and ultimately, the nation. Link is facing something no other president in the history of Allegheny has had to deal with before. There is just absolutely no way that she has any sort of malicious, spiteful or vengeful intentions in this decision, as I have seen some people accuse. There is no precedent to follow. She is setting an incredibly hard precedent that future

Presidents will look to for guidance, and she has yet to finish serving her first full year. In this whole scenario, she has little to gain, and everything to lose.

I do not blame President Link. I do not blame the Dean of Students, April Thompson, either. Someone had to deliver the news, knowing full well that whoever did was about to receive a flood of emails, some of which I imagine were not pretty. It feels like a don't-shoot-the-messenger type of situation, and although the messenger definitely helped write the message, they are not the only one who did. I truly think that Link has handled this tumultuous time well.

Two colleges about 60 minutes north of us have already announced that they plan to return this fall. I want Allegheny to be next to announce that decision. When it comes down to it, we all want to come back this fall. Personally, I cannot learn online. If I could, I would be going to an online school rather than one that costs \$65,000 per year. I came to Allegheny for the community, for the ability to be seen and not feel like I am being left behind and for the people like me that I knew I would meet there. There is nothing I want more than to go back to campus this fall. I would shave my head if it meant we could go back. I would shave my sister's head. I would give up chocolate. I would do almost anything if it means we would have a better chance of coming back this fall. If that means monitoring my room being packed from a video feed, not having any pants this summer or not having my TV — so be it. The resources are available to help me get through the anxiety and the fear, and I plan to utilize them as much as I can. I do not know what tomorrow will look like, but I know we will be getting there together. If we all take a step back, breathe, and look at our options, it becomes clear that this is the only thing we can do to guarantee a return to in-person classes.

I'll see you all this fall.

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Opinion

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