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**Welcome to our Incoming Students During this Time of National Pandemic**

Dear Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta Students,

Whether you are a new or a returning student, I look forward to having you join us as part of the Oneonta community. As Mayor of the City of Oneonta, I welcome you to our community. We value your presence and you enrich our community in many ways. Unfortunately, this year will be like no other in our history. As we speak, communities across our country are being ravaged by COVID-19 and lives are being lost. Small cities and rural communities have not been immune.

Through shared sacrifice, the people of the City of Oneonta have succeeded in keeping our number of COVID cases low. During the past 4 months, we have sacrificed nightlife, socializing with friends, eating out, and for many - even their jobs. I now ask you to join us in this spirit of shared sacrifice. As we have recently begun to see a small increase in new cases, we must recognize that stakes are high and we must all continue to sacrifice if we are to protect ourselves and each other.

Both Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta are implementing comprehensive plans designed to keep you safe while on campus and I applaud them for doing so. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, you are being required to sacrifice many of the things that make a college experience so meaningful – visiting friends, eating with friends, group activities, socializing, athletics, in-person classrooms and so much more. I know how difficult this will be and I want to thank you for your cooperation and sense of community.

While your college presidents assume the responsibility for keeping you safe on campus, I assume the responsibility to keep you safe in our community. Let's face it - it makes no sense for you to sacrifice so much when you are on campus if the same approach is not taken when off campus. The virus doesn't care where you are. The virus doesn't respect boundaries or property lines. It is happy to infect you wherever it can find you. If we fail to exercise the same controls off campus as being experienced on campus, we will then fail in our responsibility to protect you and to protect our entire community.

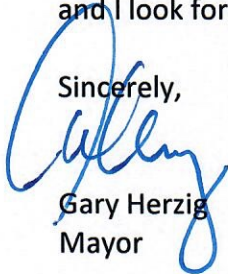
For these reasons, our regulations and practices off campus will follow the same intent of the safety plans established by your college. Key issues of which I ask you to be aware include:

- Similar to living in a campus dormitory, this year we are all expected to limit visitations. Gatherings, whether indoor or outdoor, that are deemed by our Police Department as either threats to public health or as neighborhood nuisances will not be permitted. Enforcement will be strict and violators will face fines of up to \$1,000 and criminal charges.
- In keeping with the intent of the college's safety plan, socializing, dining and drinking in large groups is too dangerous to permit. For this reason, we will be limiting the hours of public transportation to essential activities only. We will work closely with the Student Association to identify times and routes which will be needed to transport students to classes, shopping, the library, etc.
- We will all work in partnership in addressing the risk we face in relocating during a national pandemic. Each college will have a team of students, staff, and faculty meeting regularly with city officials to evaluate how things are going and, working together, make decisions on any adjustments which may be needed.
- A phone number will be published as a dedicated hotline to allow anyone to report an observed threat to public health, thereby, allowing city officials to respond rapidly.

This is not the type of year which any of us wanted to see. We are dealing with an unprecedented situation. There are many unknowns and for that reason we will remain flexible as things may play out better or worse than anticipated. Based upon circumstances, we can decide together on loosening or tightening restrictions.

We find ourselves in uncharted territory and we will need to navigate it together. Only through shared sacrifice can we ensure the health and safety of all – students, faculty, staff, and year-round community residents – while you continue with your studies. This is just the beginning and I look forward to open communication and working with you throughout the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary Herzig", is written over the typed name and title.

Gary Herzig  
Mayor