

1/29/21

Following is the NWAC weekly update hope you find it of benefit.

**Outside the NWAC**

Twenty-two people associated with the [Purdue University at Fort Wayne](https://www.insidehighered.com/college/151102/indiana-university-purdue-university-fort-wayne) women’s basketball program have made allegations of emotional abuse and bullying against head coach Niecee Nelson. The document accuses Nelson of forcing players to play through injury and when sick, denying food as punishment, mocking players for depression or perceived weight gain, withholding medical care and pressuring players to go on antidepressants and other medications, and locking a player behind closed doors while she cried and asked to leave. The document alleges that during Nelson’s tenure, three former players have been referred to mental health services for self-harm and others attempted or contemplated committing suicide. An athletic trainer with the program also alleged that Nelson’s behavior led her to self-harm. Eventually the trainer attempted suicide and resigned from the program.

An article in the Chronicle of Higher Education shares the 5 Biggest Lessons College Learned Dealing with the COVID: 1) With precautions in place, classrooms and other formal on campus spaces aren’t important vectors of viral spread; 2) Off campus social gatherings are the top drivers of coronavirus at colleges; (some Illinois students deliberately hung out with infected friends to catch the virus and “get it over with.” 3) The spread isn’t entirely off campus (dorms, residence halls, Greek houses, etc.); 4) Entry and surveillance testing are critical; 5) College-student outbreaks can lead to infections and deaths among more vulnerable people.

**Vermont's** WBB squad is the latest to call it a season amid COVID-19 concerns. The decision was made by the student-athletes with the full support of their coaches and the athletic department. "We respect our players' decisions and they have had our complete support throughout this unprecedented time," said Mayer Women's Basketball Coach [Alisa Kresge](https://uvmathletics.com/coaches.aspx?rc=1012). “I have tremendous respect for our women's basketball student-athletes, coaches and staff and fully support what I know was a very difficult decision," said Director of Athletics [Jeff Schulman](https://uvmathletics.com/staff.aspx?staff=2).

With more and more students going back to school this week, evidence from the U.S. and other countries indicates schools can operate safely with precautions and they should open for in-person instruction as soon as possible, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say.

In an article [published Tuesday in JAMA Network](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2775875), the researchers wrote that wearing masks and maintaining social distance have proved effective at limiting transmission of the coronavirus in schools, but activities such as indoor sporting events can promote spread and should be diminished.

“The preponderance of available evidence from the fall school semester has been reassuring,” the three researchers wrote. “There has been little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission.” Still, returning [college student populations](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2021/01/22/covid-raging-colleges-reopening-person-what-comes-next/4217456001/) may be at even greater risk than they were in the fall – not to mention their surrounding communities, where research has suggested greater outbreaks in college towns.

**Inside the NWAC**

Next Thursday the Executive Board will meet and items up for discussion are: updates on NWAC safety policies related to COVID, presentation of information/cost for testing of student-athletes, possible closing date, realignment, fall start.

At our Monday meeting with the State of Washington Governor’s office it was shared that there was a slight increase in COVID cases. The state is beginning to have minimal discussion on what the next Phases may look like. Additionally two new guidance documents will be posted shortly that focus on indoor events (non Higher Education) and on miscellaneous spaces that are typically used as rentals. Also there is a bill that state legislatures are working on which bans the use of Native American mascots by state business/schools, etc.

Last night the Governor’s office announced the following: the evaluation criteria for regions to move from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is changing such that regions will only be required to meet three of the four public health metrics in order to progress forward. The original roadmap required regions to meet all four. The two moving to Phase 2 on Monday are the Puget Sound region (Snohomish, King, Pierce counties) and the West region (Grays Harbor, Pacific, Thurston, Lewis). To remain in Phase 2, the region must maintain three metrics. If any region fails to meet any two metrics, they will regress to Phase 1.

On Wednesday Dr. Scott and I attended the NCAA Two-Year College Relations meeting. A few highlights from the 60 minute meeting are:

* This is a temporary hold on test score requirements (SAT ACT) from fall 2020 to spring 2022. Though individual colleges may require students to take the tests for admittance into the institution.
* As has been reported in past weekly updates, the passing of Name, Image, Likeness, legislation has been postponed. This has been done on request from the Department of Justice. NCAA is working with the DOJ on language and the postponement stems from the NIL/Alston case going to the Supreme Court. Two Year and Four Year conferences will wait on any implementation until the SCOTUS makes a decision. One concern is if the CC’s are more permissive in their application than four-year institutions, will this jeopardize the student-athlete once they transfer
* As has been reported in past weekly updates, the passing of blanket transfer has been stalled as well. This legislation stall much like NIL has been delayed at the request of the DOJ. The expectation is that this will eventually happen and the NCAA expects this to move faster than the NIL. Currently NCAA does approximately 500 of these waivers.
* Specific to D1 MBB, the temporary recruiting period is still in effect. No in person contact or evaluations are allowed. Coaches can still call and meet with recruits via Zoom. NCAA is allowing coaches to purchase live streams of recruits if certain parameters are met. To date no decision on summer recruiting has been made.
* Another meeting of this group has been scheduled for next week to talk about season of relief and progress towards degree.

Tomorrow Aaron and I will meet with representatives from Henry Schein to look at their proposal for COVID testing for NWAC student-athletes.

**Please mark February 16** on your calendar for our winter conference. More information to follow and our two key note speakers will have some very powerful information.

**Conclusion**

Many of recall the famous line from the movie Meet the Fockers, “Greg, you are now a member of the Burns’ family circle of trust.” I would like to take the “circle of trust” concept and adjust it to the “circle of safety.” As we continue to daily deal with the constant obstacles and setbacks of COVID-19, we need to work on keeping a “Circle of Safety” around us and it must be kept strong.

Ask anyone who has made it through any type of setback, depression, loneliness, failure, getting fired, a death in the family, the loss of a relationship, addiction, victimization of a crime, and yes COVID-19, how they made it through. I bet 9 out 10 times they will say something to the effect that “I could not have done it without the support of \_\_\_\_\_\_” as they say the name of a family member, friend, etc.

Many of us have experienced ill treatment whether on an airline, DMV, working with parents, etc., yet we find solace when we turn to someone to talk about our experience. The person we meet who has a family member suffering from the same disease as someone closet to us is someone with whom we bond. It is the group of people with whom we find common interest and common cause that we turn to for support.

Recently talking with someone they mentioned that they had an absolute horrible day late last week. A day filled with six Zoom meetings and then was notified that four major clients were backing out of a program in which they contributed over $60,000. She shared with me that when she shared her experience in a staff meeting, others in the staff meeting started to give advice and ways that she should handle the situation. She told me, “I didn’t need people to tell me how to do handle the situation or how to do my job. What I really needed was someone to listen to me.”

I think by the nature of the work we do and in the arena in which we do it, that those of us involved in athletics are resilient people. But we all reach that point. Our student-athletes at well may be reaching that point. Yet we seem to find the strength to endure and the strength to help. We are facing so many hardships but those hardships are manageable when we have others to help see us through, when we are the “others” to help people, and when we have a “Circle of Safety.”

Marco