

3/5/21 Weekly Update:

**Outside the NWAC:**

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| Experts predict that despite falling case rates and the introduction of vaccines, the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for months. While estimates vary, some scientists do not predict a return to the pre-2020 way of life within the next two years. What at first seemed like a matter of weeks has turned into a long haul. While “normal” (if it ever returns) may still be far off, college administrations are now saying that in fall of 2021, they’ll get as close as they can. More in-person instruction and more students on campus are the dominant themes of announcements about the upcoming term.  “Make no mistake, vaccination is the game-changer, and our fall of 21 will look completely different,” said Antonio Calcado, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Rutgers University. That doesn’t mean everyone will be there at the same time, Calcado stressed. Staggered and rotational schedules will be needed, and mask wearing and social distancing will still be required. But all students will have some in-person instruction.”  I know we'll never get back to normal. I know that,” Tommy Thompson, president of the University of Wisconsin system, told the [Associated Press](https://apnews.com/article/madison-wisconsin-coronavirus-pandemic-tommy-thompson-9cfa1a199609f7d7e82ba5d8d0fa9e52). “But I'm going to fight like hell to get back as close to normal as we possibly can. With testing, with vaccinations, with having our classes open, our dorms open, hopefully we'll be playing sports, having a good time once again.”  According to Dr. Stefan Baral, an infectious disease expert, “The vaccines will not produce “Covid Zero.” “But they are on pace and hopefully by summer will produce something that looks a lot like normalcy. The rare exceptions won’t change that, no matter how much attention they receive. The reasonable goal is to make it manageable, much like the seasonal flu. Fortunately, the vaccines are doing that. In fact, they’re doing better than that. For fully vaccinated people, serious illness from Covid is extremely rare, much rarer than serious illness from the seasonal flu.  Members of the student government at the University of Oregon were reviewing their $17 million annual budget last summer when they came across a decades-old [contract with the athletics department](https://asuo.uoregon.edu/services" \t "_blank), which gave students access to tickets for football and basketball games. About 10 percent of the student government budget, or $1.7 million, was going to the athletics department each year in exchange for “free” student tickets to athletic events, according to members of the Student Senate’s Athletics and Contracts Finance Committee. The discovery immediately raised red flags  The ASUO has been in discussion with the University of Oregon administration over the athletics agreement through which students pay for their student tickets. This year’s ASUO administration decided that the use of I Fee funds to purchase tickets was unfair due to the price we were paying, and the way tickets are allocated and distributed, therefore, the ASUO Legislative branch voted to discontinue the current athletics agreement of paying $1.7 million payments to Duck athletics. On Tuesday, UO announced it is adopting a new program the will allow students to opt in to purchase discounted season tickets to football and men’s and women’s basketball.  **Inside the NWAC:** |
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As discussed in previous weekly updates we have been working with the Oregon CC AD’s on our Health and Safety Manual to present to the Oregon Governor’s office. Back in December/January we sent our plan to Governor Brown’s office only to be told that at that time, they would not entertain other conference’s safety protocols. As you know Governor Brown announced a few weeks back she is now willing to entertain those protocols. On Tuesday, Greg Sheley on behalf of the Oregon AD’s, presented modifications to some of our protocols to the EB for their review. The EB approved the modifications and I sent the updated information to the Governor’s office. The Oregon AD’s believe that adjusting some of our protocols to align with the Cascade Collegiate Conference is the way to go. The CCC plan was recently approved by Oregon Governor Brown, and trusting that she will do the same for the NWAC. Fingers crossed!

To follow up on last week’s presentation to the WACTC on possible testing, a 5-6 question survey was sent to your presidents earlier this week. Today is the final day for the surveys to be returned to our office. Over the weekend we will review the information received and then discuss possible next steps. Again I want to reiterate, the testing presentation to the presidents was information and seen as an option.

Speaking of testing, I shared an email earlier this week that it came to our attention that the Washington Department of Health has Abot Binax tests (rapid antigen) for free. We encouraged you to reach out to your local health authorities to see if they have a supply of tests. We believe there **may be** an understanding that college institutions are prioritized for these tests. I have heard from 4 or 5 of you who followed through you have or will receive the tests, and that the amount of test received will cover your teams through our season! I would encourage you if have not done this to talk with Garet, Mary Anne, Aaron, and Barry to see how they went about securing these tests**. In fact see the attachment from Garet about his experience securing the tests. He does a great job explaining the process.**

I have received information that the Washington Governor’s Office and DOH are now looking at a **possible** Phase III implementation by the end of March/first of April. Very preliminary! At my next meeting this Monday discussion will center on possible language specific for spectators. Many of you who use off campus facilities (i.e. public parks, city parks, etc.) please follow spectator protocols as determined by the host agency. Use discretion and common sense. During the NWAC event the key is to follow safety protocols.

Speaking of protocols we have released protocols for some of our sports, travel, etc., and more are to follow. Please review and make sure everyone involved is fully aware of expectations and responsibilities. Again, use common sense and as it is stated in the protocols, *It is understood that each member college and region may need to make minor adjustments.* As an example, we understand that it may not be possible for the AD to take and send clearance information to the other AD, as the AD of the traveling team may have multiple events going on. The AD can delegate the process to someone else who is trustworthy to follow the process. Be aware that failure to follow the process because someone is unaware, lazy, or forgetful must not happen. Again common sense and wisdom is the way to go. If you have questions, just contact me.

We have been receiving requests for our member colleges to compete against four-year conferences for a variety of reasons.  Locale is a key and it is most likely the two teams involved, their conferences have granted a waiver regarding eligibility.  With that said, the NWAC encourages you to keep in mind the following, *When competing against non NWAC member colleges at a minimum, NWAC member colleges must maintain and practice current medical protocols as outlined in the NWAC Health and Safety Manual.  Should there be a discrepancy between the NWAC and the other athletic conference safety policies, the two institutions must follow the stricter guidelines to ensure compliance.*

We have had multiple cross country events and I recently asked for feedback from the participating AD’s and coaches on how things have gone. Following are a few of the pros and cons:

**Pros-** It is soooooo great to have the athletes and programs out there competing and participating in sport.  From a physical and mental standpoint, they are loving this; Covid procedures were well communicated both from our AD and Host team; The announcing of teams was great, athletes names, where they were from, Home town, and High school; Driving back for the meet I can see a spark in our athletes eyes.  I saw the difference on Mondays and Tuesday work-outs, internal motivation goes a long way.

**Cons-** No families or friends to watch them run; another challenge for us is the separation of the teams; one school didn’t provide their form until they arrived and the coach didn’t know anything about the form.

**Conclusion:**

A year ago yesterday marked the one-year anniversary of the first time we halted the 2020 Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships. I clearly remember getting a call from the VP of Business at Everett CC that we needed to meet. I asked if I could be there in about 15 minutes as I was in the middle of something and it is quite a walk from the gym to the President’s office. His response, “Get a ride and get here now.”

As I reflect on that day and all that has happened in between, to say that it has been a unique year is an understatement. For all of us the year has been filled with change, uncertainty, angst, growth, and in some respects goodness. Recently my wife and I have been binge watching the show Vikings. When watching the Vikings sail the seas there are days the water is tranquil, days the water is tumultuous, and all kinds of other days in between. It became apparent to me that this really represents this past year for the NWAC. At times this year the water has been still, at times the water has been raging, forcing us to make major adjustments or subtle changes. Unfortunately what tends to happen in the midst of uncertainty, the rage of the water causes doubt, foolish comments, and complaining from those who fear the waves of the water and from those that are not even in the boat. As we are all in the boat, we must continue to navigate through the calm waters and raging waters by working to be wise, perceptive, attentive, and patient when making decisions.

In my weekly reading and review I came along the following perspectives that I believe apply to us as we steer and ride the waves of COVID-19

\*Be who you are and say what you believe, because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.

\*You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

\*The fool has no desire to learn, but desires only to hear his own thoughts. Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, so you do not become like him. As he is only wise in his own eyes.

Until next time,

Marco