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COVID-19 Updates

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With winter approaching it is more important than ever to be careful about COVID-19. On October 22, the COVID Task Force provided Ursinus with an update: they informed students that Tuesday’s test results arrived and, like Monday, Ursinus had recorded zero new, unique positives. The task force also spoke about new CDC guidelines. They wrote, “We spoke about changes to how the CDC defines a “close contact,” which is now, ‘Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.’ We’re considering the possible impact of that change on the contact tracing process. More to come.” More information regarding COVID protocols can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact

In the email to students, the task force also discussed preparations for next semester. They wrote, “We again spoke about early preparations we need to put in place for possible spring antigen testing. We discussed the likely (and temporary) opening of Café 2020 to our community neighbors during winter break when all students are off-campus.” In the meantime it is important for students to continue following all of the guidelines that Ursinus has in place: washing hands, social distancing, taking care of your health, and paying close attention to the information Ursinus puts out in regards to the virus.

On https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/wellness-center/covid-19-coronavirus/ students can access information regarding COVID at Ursinus as well as national updates. Staying informed is one of the most effective things students can do to protect themselves and others.

Campus Visit Safety

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Millions of high school students are currently trying to choose a college in the midst of a pandemic. The pressure for seniors specifically is building. When the risk of coronavirus spread was extremely high, many campuses were offering virtual visit experiences only, making it hard to decide where to apply and attend.

Now that some restrictions have been lifted, Ursinus College is offering both virtual and in-person tours for potential students. The school has implemented strict rules and guidelines to help keep visitors and students safe during these campus visits.

Guests who visit campus need to take precautions like those students do -- and then some. It is suggested that guests limit their exposure to others prior to arriving on campus. The college’s website advises potential students to, “limit your visitors to you and no more than two family members.” When on campus, all guests meet their tour guide outdoors on the Schellhase Commons patio. They need to wear their masks and stay six feet apart from the guide and other individuals on campus.

The Office of Admissions is still not holding in-person events that attract large crowds such as open houses or admitted students day. Emilio DeSousa, a sophomore, thinks Ursinus opening its doors to the public is not a good idea right now. “I think we need to create a bubble for our own safety, thus Ursinus should keep their doors closed to the public. I often see Collegeville folk walking their dogs without masks and that makes me feel very unsafe.” DeSousa said even if guests get tested before arriving on campus but still wouldn’t feel safe. “In a time like this, I think it’s best to wait until the spring semester.”

Arthur Artene, another sophomore, does feel safe welcoming guests on campus but only if they follow the college’s guidelines. Artene believes, “if a guest is wearing a mask and is keeping a six-foot distance from students and trying to sanitize as much as possible, I don’t see why they wouldn’t allow guests on campus.”

The tours are preceded by visitor information sessions, which cover the “bear necessities” with future students and their families, including everything from financial aid to activities on campus. The virtual information session and tour consists of videos from a portal.
Although pushed back to 2021, this summer's Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan were to be the first that introduced skateboarding as a recognized event. It was a move that was based on the declining viewership of the games as a whole, with the International Olympic Committee hoping that the inclusion of the sport would bolster its numbers among millennials and younger audiences, according to "Business Insider." The International Olympic Committee's move to include skateboarding in its competition is yet another example of the recurring cultural embrace (or re-embrace, depending on who you ask) of skateboarding and skate culture at large.

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The initially small, counter-cultural activity was born most likely in the 1950's, probably as a result of surfers trying to find something to do when the waves declined. Since then, skateboarding has slowly become a mainstay of American pop-culture, yet it has not strayed from its counter-cultural roots. Nowadays, it can be argued that skating is more popular than it ever has been. Recent movies like 2018's "Mid90s" directed by Jonah Hill, along with yearly skating competitions like the Vans Park Series (which the aforementioned International Olympic Committee based their park portion of their competition on), have all made skating arguably more relevant than it ever has been.

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ALMA’s Latin Night

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The Association of Latinos Motivated to Achieve (ALMA) hosted their annual Latin Night event on Oct. 16, 2020, with great success. With COVID-19 around, however, slight changes were made. For instance, the Latin Night that is usually held annually in Lower Wismer was hosted outdoors in tents. Additionally, the usual surplus amount of food was cut down to only tamales, pupusas, and empanadas, with sides of lettuce and sour cream sauce, all wrapped up, packaged, and boxed for people to grab and go.

Karen Herrera ’21, treasurer of ALMA, reflected on the event. “Latin Night was successful, despite the constraints of the COVID guidelines!” Herrera said. “There was limited food and space, and that was reflected in the amount of people that could attend, but we really had a good turnout...it was nice to continue our ALMA tradition of a Latin Night every semester!”

“To be able to have Latin Night on campus,” Herrera continued, “it needed to be moved outside...[using] the tents where lectures are held. Getting those reserved and decorating them, along with ordering pre-packaged meals from the restaurant in Phoenixville were the major differences in our preparation for the night.”

The nightful event had a slow start at first, but picked up around 9:00 p.m., when many in attendance danced to Latin/Hispanic music. Some of those moments were captured and snapped on the organization's Instagram story, “@ursinusalma.”

ALMA likes to have hands-on events as much as possible. The student organization's discussion-based events have not been severely impacted by the pandemic as those continue virtually. Yet, the COVID-19 regulations have made the ALMA board members think more about finding ways to maintain the organization itself.

In general, COVID-19 has kept many familiar faces remote this semester, making the physical interactions within the ALMA setting less exciting. “Personally, I miss seeing familiar faces on campus...Latin culture is very interactive and physical contact is common,” Herrera stated. “Latin culture is very interactive and physical contact is common (a kiss on the cheek or a hug when greeting). COVID [has] limit[ed] this and I would say it is very apparent!”

Stay tuned for ALMA's next event: the Skull Painting Night in celebration of Dia de los Muertos (“Day of the Dead”) this late October.

Karen Herrera 2021

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OPINION

Studying to Learn vs. Studying for Memorization

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Could you recall the information you studied for that big psychology exam you had to take last week? Most likely not, in my experience. Some classes’ approach to learning skews more towards studying to memorize rather than studying to understand and learn. Memorizing allows you to recite or recall information on command.

Learning means a student can understand the meaning of the information and can apply and use that information in your life in various situations. What has college taught you? Do not confuse this question with memorization. Think instead about what lessons and educational values you, a UC student, learned and retained during your time here. Hard to recall, right?

In order to learn something, a student must understand it, rather than memorizing it for an exam the week before and then being unable to recall the information weeks later. A student might believe they are being studious or insightful as they memorize, but that’s just a side effect. This concept may seem tricky to understand, but here is an example: You can’t learn alphabetical order, you can only memorize it. On the other hand, memorizing anything that you’ll need to build upon, improvise on, or improve is foolish. A student will need to do the necessary amount of work to understand it instead.

Meaningful learning helps students understand how all the pieces of a concept fit together, and how to apply knowledge gained to new situations. It is active, constructive, engaging, and stays with students for life. Students who are taught understanding vs. memorizing are most likely to have better problem solving and cognitive skills. Students who study to learn know how to investigate, evaluate, analyze, remember, make comparisons, and communicate. When you understand a concept, you will remember it for years, whereas when you memorize the same, you will remember it merely for days and gradually forget it. Conceptual understanding helps you comprehend the information on a deeper level, unlike memorizing which merely touches the surface. Has the education system shifted from elementary school to now our time at college, or has it remained the same? A distinct memory of any elementary/middle school math experience is the times tables. Do students understand and did they learn what those time tables mean? Or were those timed practice sheets only utilizing our memorization skills and not LEARNING?

Conceptual ideas need to be taken into account for more than just memorization, professors should teach students to take the lessons they are learning in class and incorporate an assignment to relate it outside the acres of Ursinus College. Application of learning is incredibly important for when graduates step out into the real world and ask, how am I going to apply x, y, and z, to the rest of my life? This is why studying to learn should be implemented and encouraged far more frequently than memorization, from an early age and into college.

Keep Your Dorm Room Clean!

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A hurricane has taken over my Reimert dorm room. Books cover the desk, while the top of my dresser is starting to get buried by The Bakery’s red top pizza boxes and takeout Wismer containers. The pyramid of used-but-still-usable clothes kept on the chair has become the envy of the Egyptian pyramids. The trashcan has already been overflowing for weeks and has now reached the point where it could easily be featured on the top of one of those “college trash Jenga” meme collections on the net. The air in the dorm is getting so musty and dust-laden that you could literally cut it with a knife.

Does this sound familiar to you? There is no denying that a messy environment can have a negative impact on one’s state of mind. However, especially during college years, it can be challenging to keep your room clean. It doesn’t matter if you are a freshman or a senior, it’s easy to get caught up in a vortex of lectures, classwork, extracurricular activities, and unforgettable parties. Coming back to a clean room reduces my anxiety as well as improves my mood, but why should I keep it extremely clean even if I do not study there? But just because you enjoy a mess when you work doesn’t mean you can’t make choices to combat the messiness after your creative time. Putting things away after you take them out can give you a sense of completion and fulfillment as you clean up your study space.

Respect your surroundings -- if you clean the room you come home to every night for the three to four months UC students live on campus, life will be easier. Keeping a tidier room will both reduce stress levels, already skyrocketed from schoolwork, and create a calming oasis when returning from a long day of classes, sports, and extra curriculars. Especially during difficult times, as we are living through right now, studying in your dorm room may be the safest option. To be surrounded by clutter, while simultaneously cramming your brain with notecards, bibliographies and endless amounts of papers due by 11:59 pm, the inability to see the floor should not be an added stress factor.

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is make my bed. This is the smallest accomplishment to do, but it means a great deal; it will be the first task you will have completed for the day, with more tasks to follow throughout the next fourteen or so hours. Having a made bed changes the tone of the room, a made bed will then make the rest of your dorm room look incredibly cluttered, motivating you to tidy up before going to practice, class, or Wis. These small accomplishments will make 30 pages of Biology reading seem less stressful, surrounded by a tidy, almost spotless dorm room.

Next time, don’t wait till Sunday to clean your dorm room, clean it now. It will make hundreds of noticeable changes in your everyday routine, especially as a student!
motivated through our training and work ethic.” As a sophomore, taking a stand on a team with which you have only had one full season can be very intimidating, but Chambers is willing to do anything to keep her team as motivated as possible.

“Personally, it has been a challenge to step up into a leadership position on the team as a sophomore without an official season.”
—Holly Chambers
Class of 2023

Although Chambers and her fellow teammates are able to continue practicing, they are not able to have any meets with any other teams, so what does this team do in order to mimic their once “normal” season? Setting up the ‘stage’ to imitate the style of the meet seems to be the new task under COVID-19 regulations, “In terms of personal goals, our coaches have set up time trials to mimic the idea of a race to physically see and feel improvement, as well as learning how to race together,” says Chambers. Being able to come together as a team and race just as if they were in a meet allows the team to be able to bond even without it being what they were once used to. Stanziani goes on to talk about the disappointment of this season being cancelled, but how this has not stopped them to push harder and harder, “This year allows for us to continue developing to become even higher performing athletes.” Only being allowed to practice this season has led him to focus more on some of the things that he may not have been able to focus on in a regular season.

Without having an actual season, it can be hard to find things to help motivate the team and get them to where they need to be. However, Stanziani believes that the team bond that they have is one of the reasons why they remain so strong, “The positive mindset for cross-country does not just come from competitions. It comes from the bond you share with the teammates, encouraging each other to better themselves as an athlete and striving for greater capabilities than you started with at the beginning of the season.”

“This year allows for us to continue developing to become even higher performing athletes.”
—Payton Stanziani
Class of 2023

On the other hand, Chambers believes that the team is where they are today because of their coaches. “I believe Coach Blickle and Coach Bacon are the reason why we are maintaining such a positive mindset despite not having a regular season,” says Chambers. Maintaining that normal for the team is imperative and will help them be successful in the long run, no pun intended.

Staying as positive and looking on the bright side of things helps this team to keep pushing forward at what is ahead. We wish the best of luck to the cross-country team, and are hopeful that they will be able to get back to their once “normal” season. Go Bears!

“With how the teams have embraced the new normal...” Coach Kevin Small of the Men’s Basketball Team talks about how he developed strategies to deal with the fact that his seniors may not finish out their time here at Ursinus the way they had hoped. “I am devastated for our seniors; it looks unlikely that they will have anything resembling a senior season. I am constantly mindful of trying to offer them a ‘fun basketball’ experience, making this season for my players a time to have fun playing hoops, while allowing them room to leave a legacy and help them feel like they are completing a career,” says Small. With basketball being both indoors and incompatible with social distancing, the team is working hard at conditioning and individual shooting drills.

“My group of athletes are extremely grateful that the sport they live, breathe and love is such a naturally socially distanced sport...”
—Coach Pete
Tennis Coach

While his players struggle with the uncertainty of this season, Coach Small, and other coaches, are disappointed that they cannot see what their players have worked so hard for. “I love to compete and am definitely missing the kind of season where you build a team: teach the fundamentals of the game; build cohesion and role awareness; and create momentum to improve and be a playoff winning team. Without the incentive of a game schedule, it’s been tricky to balance player development for returning players with basketball experience for our seniors,” says Coach Small. He continues to move forward with energy, persistence, and ambition.

Beyond all of the coaches and their teams, the environment of Coaches’ Row is missed not only by Small, but all of the other coaches, staff and players. Coaches lead their teams by examples and continue to hold the same high standards as if it were any other year. Go Bears!
Keeping Up With the Coaches

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While this is an unprecedented fall season for Ursinus' student athletes, it is just as much of a change for the coaches. In the last two months, coaches have made adjustments to routines that used to flow smoothly from season to season. Still recovering from the shortened spring seasons of 2020, and now the curtailment of athletics this fall, coaches are working to keep their student-athletes motivated.

They have been devising plans to make practices safe, while simultaneously having teams exercising and working efficiently. Between masks, social distancing, team dynamic changes, and modified team bonding and interaction on the playing field, the Ursinus Athletics community is experiencing great adversity. The Saturdays around here are quieter now, but the coaches continue to keep up their players’ spirits so that when the time does come around again for competition, all of the teams will be ready.

Ursinus alum and tennis coach, Pete Smith ’91, who has been the coach for the men’s team for fourteen seasons and the women’s for seven, says how grateful he is to be coaching tennis during these unprecedented times. “My group of athletes are extremely grateful that the sport they live, breathe and love is such a naturally socially distancing sport, generally played by only two athletes, outdoors standing approximately 75 feet away from each other. The team has been great adjusting to everything, and we have remained vigilant during all other times at practice,” says Coach Pete. Coach Pete adds, “I feel like the practices have gone exceedingly well under the circumstances, I’m really happy

Cross Country’s New Role

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As COVID-19 guidelines continue to change, so do all fall sports as they work to keep up with the constant updates and adjustments. Cross Country is no exception, as they have had their season altered in every way. With no meets, the team is left strictly to practice. This leaves most of them having to look in a different direction in order to succeed in this current "season" as well as future seasons. What exactly do these changes look like, and how has it affected the members of the cross-country team?

In terms of team adjustments, for this team, there have been many struggles. Wearing a mask while running for long periods of time presents them with some struggles in terms of breathing, but this does not stop them from continuing on how they normally would. Sophomore Payton Stanziani talks about his struggles with a mask during practice. “The mask while at practice is the biggest adjustment for us as a team, it is not ideal, but we have no issues with wearing it if that means we are safe and still able to practice together.” Current sophomore, Holly Chambers, explains some of her more personal challenges in this very abnormal season, "Personally, it has been a challenge to step up into a leadership position on the team as a sophomore without an official season. But regardless of the changes, we have all been able to stay connected and..."