Some spring quarter fees waived

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Spring Fee Total: $574.46

Graphic by Riel Hanson

Stay-at-home order affecting local businesses
CWU connecting Alexa to canvas
Senior athletes discuss returning next year

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Stay-at-home order affecting local businesses

An email was sent to the student body from President James Gaudi-no detailing which fees the university would be waiving for the upcoming spring quarter. This information was sent out 11 days before the April 14 deadline for fees to be paid.

“We’ve been talking about fees for a long time... with the goal of minimizing the amount of fees to the greatest extent possible,” Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Business and Financial Affairs and Board of Trustees Treasurer Joel Klucking said.

The email breaks down fees into categories of waived and continued.

Waived Fees

Fees that have been listed as waived are as follows:

- The athletics fee, the Central Transit fee, the dining contract cancellation fee (for students who have purchased but won’t be able to use a meal plan), the housing contract cancellation fee (for students not residing in Ellensburg campus housing), the late payment fee, the late registration fee, the library fee, the parking fee, the online course fee and the wellness fee.

Continued Fees

Fees that will continue to be charged to students for spring quarter 2020 were broken into three categories as follows:

- Student Services Fees
- Technology Fee
- Tuition Fees

Where are we now?

A longtime and respected Kittitas County resident has died from COVID-19 complications, according to the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD). This is the first COVID-19 related death in Kittitas County. The person tested positive on April 3 and died at the University of Washington Medical Center on April 5.

“We know this person had friends and loved ones, a strong religious community, and is missed by many,” KCPHD Health Officer Mark Larson said in a press release.

No further information is being released about the individual out of respect for loved ones.

KCPHD launched a new data dashboard, displaying the COVID-19 outbreak in Kittitas County. As of April 8 there are 15 confirmed cases with a single death in the county. There have been 426 negative tests with 34 tests still pending.

With more than 8,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee’s stay-at-home order has been extended until at least May 5. The order bans all gatherings and requires nonessential businesses to close.

Essential businesses include grocery stores, food banks, gas stations and other similar locations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommend everybody who leaves the house should wear a face mask.

“We have taken dozens of steps under my emergency powers to help people in this time – including moratoriums on evictions, mortgage forbearance, utility ratepayer assistance, unemployment extensions, flexibility on tax payments and cash assistance to families,” Inslee said in a press release.

Continued on Page 3
Observation Deck

Nicholas Tucker  
Editor in Chief

What a time to take over the paper, huh? Here it is, the first issue of a redesigned paper both under my tenure as Editor-in-Chief and which has been designed entirely remotely. The staff has worked diligently to make this happen and keep the paper going, and none of it would be possible without the amount of dedication and innovation that they’ve shown over the past weeks.

The news goes on. Stories keep unfolding. Call it the hyper-romanticization of journalism, but I hope we can remind the public of what’s still out there in our neighborhoods. I see the same view outside of my office window every day, and as I leave my house less frequently, it’s easy for me to forget what’s out there.

It’s easy to get into the pattern of my staff haven’t really changed. Over the past few years, The Observer has seen an incredible amount of growth. The news never stops, and what we can no longer learn with face-to-face interviews dressed professionally, we’ll learn over the phone in our pajamas.

My goals for the upcoming quarter haven’t really changed. Over the past few years, The Observer has seen an incredible amount of growth as a publication, and I will be striving to solidify that growth so it doesn’t slip away with the changing of the guard after many of us graduate. I don’t have much to worry about, as much of our current staff will still be there to keep the paper going and improve it in ways I can’t imagine. However, it’s best that they don’t have to start from scratch.

We’ve got a rough quarter ahead, and probably a rough many months beyond that. We’ll keep living and doing our jobs though, to the best of our ability, knowing that we have each other to lean on. The story of history shows that the darkest times often lead to the finest hours, so let’s get through them and meet for a drink on the other side.

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Editorial Policy. The Observer is a public forum for student expression, in which student editors make policy and content decisions. The mission of The Observer is two-fold: to serve Central Washington University as a newspaper and to provide training for students who are seeking a career in journalism. The Observer seeks to provide complete, accurate, dependable information to the campus and community; to provide a public forum for the free debate of issues, ideas and problems facing the community at large; and to be the best source of information, education and entertainment news. As a training program, The Observer is the practical application of the theories and principles of journalism. It teaches students to analyze and communicate information that is vital to the decision making of the community at large. It provides a forum for students to learn the ethics, values and skills needed to succeed in their chosen career. If you have questions or concerns, email us at cwuobserver@gmail.com.
University announces some fees waived

Continued from Page 1

Fees linked to Contractual Obligations

The Student Union and Recreation Center Fees support bonds that were used to build the facility and cannot be waived.

The Service and Activities Fee supports bonds that were used to construct student mandated projects, as well as paying for direct student services and student programs.

Construction on some buildings, like the SURC, isn’t paid for up front according to Executive Vice President of ASCWU Alejandro Alcantar. It’s paid over time with bond payments. This is why there’s a legal obligation for CWU to still charge these fees.

Alcantar also addressed the distinction between voluntary and mandatory fees. He specified that voluntary fees are not voluntary in the most literal sense. It means they are not fees required by the state. The SURC fees are voluntary fees in this sense.

Students who may not be able to pay their fees can apply for a fee waiver from the Dean of Student Success’ office, which Alcantar says are evaluated on a case by case basis.

"I think they anticipated that a lot of students were going to request fee waivers, especially since they weren’t going to be on campus," Alcantar said. "I think the university made the right choice in waiving a lot of the fees already."

Klucking said that waiving fees may put departments into difficult situations. For the athletic department, much of the money has already been spent on uniforms and equipment, and it could face a $400,000 deficit this year.

"When we charge a fee, it’s because we have a cost, and because we’re providing a service," Klucking said. "And just because a student can’t participate... doesn’t mean we don’t have all the costs associated with that."

The email states that ASCWU’s statements are not viable options for the university at this time.

"[Gillis’] statements are not how the university should be addressing the COVID-19 pandemic," the letter states. "As the largest employer in the region, Central Washington University has an obligation to the community, employees and it’s students to provide continuous employment to all of it’s employees."
Comprehensive sex ed bill passes

Senior Reporter

Abigail Duchow

Gov. Jay Inslee signed a bill on March 27 requiring comprehensive sexual education to be taught in public schools in the state of Washington.

Requirements of SB 5395

According to the bill, new sex ed curriculum must be evidence-informed and medically and scientifically accurate. The bill also states that the curriculum taught must be age-appropriate.

The bill requires that public schools teach sex ed that teaches students about how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unintended pregnancies. The bill also requires instruction that promotes healthy relationships, identifies and responds to sexual violence and emphasizes the importance of consent.

The bill states abstinence cannot be the only method taught for preventing STDs and unintended pregnancies. Abstinence can be taught as a method of prevention, along with teaching about contraceptives and other disease prevention.

Schools will be able to choose which curriculum they feel is best for their community. Schools will also have the option to develop their own curricula, as long as it meets the requirements of SB 5395.

Parents and guardians can choose to have their children excused from any sex ed taught in school. They may also request to review the curriculum that is going to be taught.

ASCUW Lobbyists

Zadkary Turner, ASCUW VP for Legislative Affairs, has lobbied for the bill in Olympia from January until March. Turner thinks the bill will be helpful not only for grades K-12, but for everyone, including college students.

"The way we think it impacts higher education is by teaching consent and healthy relationships," Turner said. "We really believe that our students need to know about these things by the time they get to college. It's something that will really help lower numbers of sexual assault and domestic violence on campus."

Turner shared his experience with sex ed when he was in middle and high school.

"I'm a gay man. When I was in middle school, my sex ed teacher told me that gay people don't exist ... when she would address what sex for queer people looks like, she would make a lot of homophobic remarks." Turner said, "I think that was really not helpful for me as a person, being told that being gay wasn't normal."

Turner said that his school district was among those that don't teach students about abortion and other contraceptives and safe sex practices.

ASCUW Legislative Liaison Nancy Canales-Montiel also lobbied for the bill. She thinks the bill will help keep people safe and informed on how to stay healthy.

"Studies show repeatedly that sexual assault, violence and other things like teen pregnancy are linked to poor or abstinence-only sex education," Canales-Montiel said. "By implementing this and teaching children at a young age, they will grow up with a safer and healthier culture."

Canales-Montiel said although these conversations may be scary for some, they are necessary for having a healthy and informed society.

"It's medically and scientifically accurate data that we must teach our children and our people so that we can live healthier lives," Canales-Montiel said. "I don't see a difference between a doctor telling you 'eat healthy and exercise everyday' and a sex ed teacher telling you to use preventative methods."

Stay home order impacts local businesses

Senior Reporter

Mitchell Roland

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Ellensburg businesses are learning to adjust to the new reality of operating in a stay-at-home order.

Gov. Jay Inslee issued a stay at home proclamation for the state on March 23 in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus. Under the proclamation, all nonessential businesses must temporarily close unless their employees can work remotely.

Restaurants in the state have been closed since March 15, when Gov. Inslee announced the temporary shutdown of bars and dine-in restaurants.

Zoe Zhou, the owner of Oyama Japanese Steak House, said the shutdown is having a major impact on her restaurant.

"We've been closed for two weeks. There's no income. This is our livelihood right here," she said. "You feel lucky to own your own business until a situation like this."

Zhou said she worries more about just the financial impact of the virus. Zhou said an Oyama employee had rocks thrown at them while grocery shopping and were told to "go home."

"It scares me," she said. "We have an additional 16 employees on top of the 70 working the restaurant." Zhou said the safety of her employees is most important during the pandemic.

"The virus does not pick races," she said.

Zhou said Oyama closed the day Gov. Inslee banned dining in at restaurants. While Gov. Inslee's declaration still allows takeout and delivery, Zhou said closing altogether was easier.

Zhou said she's heard restaurant owners who remained open for takeout have had little business, meaning it might not be financially worth it to partially reopen.

If the ban on dine-in continues, Zhou said she will have to consider all options, including reopening for takeout.

Zhou said the closure began, Oyama's phones have rung often, which Zhou said gives her hope that "[they] might have some business there if [they] end up coming back.

Molly Jones, the executive director of the Ellensburg Downtown Association, said this is uncharted territory for business owners.

"We are all going through this for the very first time, so the impacts will be seen as we move forward," she said. "Obviously, the closing of a small business has immediate impacts on the business owner's livelihood, as well as the staff." Jones said CWU students leaving will have a large impact on Ellensburg businesses.

"Students are an important part of our local economy as they shop and dine downtown, so we understand that with them being home or unable to venture out, we will see a decline they need to struggle to become a reality this year," she said.

Jones recommended people shop online, order takeout and purchase gift cards as ways to support businesses currently closed.

"Share a throwback picture of you at the location to promote them, or let them know you appreciate them with a nice message," she said.

Jones said the more people follow the stay at home order, the quicker businesses can reopen.

"We need everyone who can stay home to stay home so we can get back to business sooner," Jones said.

The uncertainty in the situation is what worries Zhou.

"I don't know if this is going to be a reality," she said.

"Not knowing when we can come back is the big issue right now."

Even if Oyama were to reopen during spring quarter, Zhou said with less students, they would be without a large portion of their customer base.

"A lot of my clientele are the students and professors and parents visiting," Zhou said. "There's a big difference with students being gone."
How students are staying active

Amy Morris
Scene Editor

With gyms and the rest of the CWU campus closed, students have to find other ways to work out. Whether it’s doing crunches, going for a run or doing yoga, getting a workout in has its benefits.

Caitlin Wilhelm, a sophomore majoring in business, thinks it is very important to attain a physical regimen, especially when having to stay at home.

“Getting outside and moving your body in some way is really important,” Wilhelm said. “Even if it’s not a full-blown workout with weights and gym equipment because a lot of people don’t have that now.”

Wilhelm said she does a lot of different workouts at home such as boxing, lifting weights, yoga, pilates and stretches. Being cooped up inside isn’t great on someone’s mental health and getting a workout in can help, Wilhelm said.

“I try to work out for my mental health and my anxiety,” Wilhelm said. “That’s kind of why I work out but also just to keep my sanity in this insane time right now. Just to have endorphins flowing and just to feel good.”

The biggest benefit exercise provides is maintaining overall health, according to Drew Moore, a senior majoring in clinical physiology.

The more sedentary a person is, the higher risk they have of increasing their chance of a respiratory disease, infection or risking their own cardiovascular health.

If someone is not staying physically active, they are not moving their body and their blood is not going to be flowing as much, according to Moore.

Even though people are supposed to stay inside for the majority of time, going outside for a run can still be beneficial, Moore said.

“You can still go on runs, you can still workout outside in the park and everything,” Moore said. “If you need some sunshine, open your door, open your window and look outside for a little bit. Make sure you are staying healthy and active.”

Another big thing is it can be easy to get depressed when staying cooped up in your house for long periods of time, according to Moore.

“Some people who are really going through it with their families who may have COVID-19 or their families who have small businesses who might end up going under because of this could be stressing out or [they] could get anxiety about that,” Moore said.

Weightlifting or finding other forms of exercise could help with releasing tension built up from stress. Moore said fiddling with things around the house to work out with can be effective.

“The other day I was doing curls with my chair,” Moore said. “The best way to do it is understanding that if I’m lifting it further away from the center of mass it’s going to be heavier then if I am lifting it right at the center of mass.”

Moore said since the stay-at-home order has been in place, he has been working out a lot more.

He used to be on a very strict exercise schedule with work and classes but now has more time to fit in yoga and other exercises he wouldn’t normally do. Yoga helps a lot with mental health, physical health and staying mobile, Moore said.

“[I] wake up in the morning, do some yoga, eat some food and maybe in the afternoon watch a movie and do another workout and the rest of the night I’m just chilling,” Moore said.

The more someone stays sitting down, the worse it’s going to be on their joints, Moore said.

According to Moore, if you’re standing and playing video games, it’s a lot better than sitting because if you’re sitting you are not weight-bearing.

“I love video games just as much as the next person… if I’m going to be out there playing video games hours on end or watching movies … I need to make sure my body has been moved at least for thirty minutes, hopefully an hour, before I am going into those activities where I’m sitting for hours on end,” Moore said.

Tim Burnham, a professor of clinical physiology and the director of exercise science, said the number one benefit of trying to get some exercise at home would be the psychosocial benefits, which is how people interact.

Under that psychosocial category is a reduction in stress. Exercise is very effective in reducing someone’s stress and improving their mood, according to Burnham.

A person is going to feel more energy when they work out, Burnham said. There is evidence it can decrease anxiety and depression as well.

“So all those things taken together are going to improve somebody’s quality of life. So I think … improvement in … mood and a decrease in stress and … in depression and things like that. I think that’s really beneficial right now,” Burnham said.

Exercise can have an influence on your immune system as well.

COVID-19 can cause someone with a compromised immune system to have a more complicated outcome, according to Burnham.

If someone does low to moderate levels of exercise, both in duration and intensity, it will improve someone’s immune function and they’ll be better able to repel viruses, according to Burnham.

On the other side, if someone works out too much then their immune system will decline and they are more likely to get sick, according to Burnham.

Another benefit of working out is cognitive function.

Exercise independent of everything else keeps the brain and people’s thinking abilities in top function, according to Burnham.

Different activities
• Yoga
• Running
• Weights
• Pilates
• Boxing
• Bicycling

Different exercises
• Crunches
• Squats
• Lunges
• Plank
• Burpee
• Push-up
In mid-March, Gov. Jay Inslee announced the prohibition of in-person dining at restaurants across the state. The effects of this order on the $13.5 billion dollar industry have yet to be fully seen, but with over 300,000 employees potentially affected, Washington's restaurants have had to adapt quickly.

“I didn’t really believe it at first,” Mario Alfaro, owner of The Red Pickle said.

Due to the transition to delivery orders, The Red Pickle had to temporarily lay off many of their employees. Alfaro said he is looking forward to when the order is lifted and he can hire all of them back again.

In addition to affecting the number of customers The Red Pickle gets, the order has had an effect on the supply side of business as well. Dominique Addison, The Red Pickle’s head chef, said the order prevented the restaurant from getting the locally-grown microgreens and other produce they use.

“It just gave our food a connection to the community and gave a punch to the taste. We’ve had to go to other suppliers for now but we’re looking forward to when we can go back to getting things locally,” Addison said.

The change of ingredients hasn’t kept The Red Pickle’s most loyal customers from enjoying their food. Addison said they still get large orders to feed families, including one which had a meal delivered from Ellensburg to Seattle. The Red Pickle is currently open on most days from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.. However, according to Dante Palmisano, one of the two owners of Ano Delivery, on Friday April 3 The Red Pickle closed at 5:30 p.m. due to the sheer amount of orders they received throughout the day.

The Red Pickle has been working closely with Ano Delivery throughout the shutdown. Ano was started by two CWU students last year, Palmisano and Juan Zamorano, who have seen their business booming recently.

“80 percent of our business goes through the drive-through anyway, so we were really lucky that we didn't have to change too much,” Williams said.

This means Williams has so far been able to keep her staff employed. However, she said she understands the impact that the shutdown is having on other restaurants in Ellensburg, and has been making a conscious effort to patronize their fellow local businesses more often.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Ano Delivery has implemented multiple measures to keep themselves and their customers safe. They have encouraged their customers to use contactless payment, using services like Cashapp to avoid the potentially risky exchange of bills, and have also begun wearing masks when delivering to those in at-risk populations.

Some Ellensburg restaurants haven’t had to adapt their businesses much to keep their operations going. Josie Williams, owner of Campus U-Tote-Em, always wanted a bigger dining area. The lot that Campus U-Tote-Em is on doesn't have enough space for expansion, which disappointed Williams until she heard the announcement from Gov. Inslee.

“Their’s this blind guy that we deliver food to and he got the chicken and waffles from The Red Pickle, and he explained exactly what was going on the whole time he was eating it,” Zamorano said. “He was like ‘the waffles and the syrup man, holy shit!’ telling us both on separate times about his experience.”

Since the shutdown, the two students went around Ellensburg to different restaurants, asking if they would be interested in a partnership. While many of their app-based competitors have a limited radius of operation, Palmisano and Zamorano say their willingness to deliver anywhere has given them a great increase in business, and that they regularly drive to Yakima and Cle Elum to bring customers the Ellensburg cuisine they enjoy.

“80 percent of our business goes through the drive-through anyway, so we were really lucky that we didn't have to change too much,” Williams said.

This means Williams has so far been able to keep her staff employed. However, she said she understands the impact that the shutdown is having on other restaurants in Ellensburg, and has been making a conscious effort to patronize their fellow local businesses more often.
There are restaurants that me and my husband had never eaten at before the shutdown,” Williams said. “But many of them don’t have a drive-through and are having a rough time, so we’re just trying to give them our business whenever we can.
April 8, 2020

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basic idea of what Amazon products they exa project the last two weeks of the fall something good with it,” Bodenhamer said. 

tuition, you want [administration] to do voice accessible. 

operations. He wanted CWU to be more by Andreas Bowman, the vice president of work for two quarters. 

project, which is a big project requiring work for two quarters. 

Alexa device. 

of five computer science se- niors have been working on this project. While creating this special Alexa device may seem like a challenge, the computer science students did it in 10 weeks. 

According to Emily Bodenhamer, one of the students working on the project, the purpose of having a special Alexa device is to make it easier for first year students to navigate campus and their classes. 

While the initial budget for the project was $500, the students only used around $50-60 total. The device is finalized for the student’s project but it will still take around 2-5 years for CWU to implement them. 

The students are now handing off the Alexa device to the business department for further testing and implementation, according to Riley Krall, one of the stu- dents on this project. 

The Alexa device will first be imple- mented in Dugmore Hall but the final goal is to have Alexa devices placed in all dorm rooms. 

When a computer science student be- comes a senior, they have to do a Capstone project, which is a big project requiring work for two quarters. 

The Alexa project was first introduced by Andreas Bowman, the vice president of operations. He wanted CWU to be more voice accessible. 

“I mean, you are paying so much in tuition, you want [administration] to do something good with it,” Bodenhamer said. The students were assigned the Al- exa project the last two weeks of the fall 2019 quarter. 

At that time, they were just getting a basic idea of what Amazon products they were going to use. 

The students officially started work- ing on the project in the beginning of winter quarter. That is when they started doing all the coding and talking about all the design aspects. The first step in creating the special Alexa device was doing the front end and the back end development. 

The front end is just where you ask Alexa questions and the back end means Alexa will process the question to be able to answer it. 

Bodenhamer said they wanted to start with the easier things first, so the next thing they did was implement web scraping. 

When putting the information in the database the first things that were inputted were building hours and clubs. Those were the easiest to do, according to Bodenhamer. 

Bodenhamer said after they got the easy stuff out of the way, they went into implementing Canvas and the calendar system the school uses. 

The calendar system has any CWU event you can think of, such as Monday Movie Madness and PolyFest. 

Implementing Canvas into Alexa took the longest. Bodenhamer said they had to make a website in order for the students to have their Canvas information saved in a database. 

Alexa is already connected to the data- base, so when students use the website, they send all the information to the database. 

What Alexa will do is connect to the database and search for the student’s information. So students will say their CWU ID and their PIN. Alexa will go to the database and find the student’s ID and PIN. 

Then Alexa will take that information and use it to get into the student’s Canvas account and give information on their as- signments and classes. 

For students who may not know what to ask Alexa, on the website there is also a list of possible questions students can ask. Bodenhamer believes moving towards becoming more technologically advanced and having voice-enabled devices will make it easier for students to use Canvas. 

Tyler Huson, one of the students on the team, thinks there is a bit of a miscon- ception with voice-enabled devices. Huson said a lot of people believe the devices are recording at all times but that is not exactly the case. They are listening at all times and waiting for the right words to start recording, Huson said.

Students asked questions to the de- vice to make sure it worked properly. They were able to connect to their own student accounts which was the authen- tication testing. 

“We are very happy with this product,” Krall said. “We are actually very happy with how it came out. It kind of proves what we can implement for the school.”
During freshman convocation, students were told the university would be there for them when they needed it. No matter if it took four years, five years or more, the university would be so proud to announce your name at commencement. It’s clear a commencement ceremony cannot happen under the current health orders put in place, but recent health orders put in place, but

While the university has said it’s looking into ways to still honor graduates, anything less than postponing the in-person ceremony is not good enough. Washington State University has scheduled a virtual graduation ceremony in May and two possible dates for in-person ceremonies. CWU should follow suit.

The Associated Students of the University of Washington at Bothell (ASUWB) sent out a survey to students asking their preference about commencement plans. The survey listed different possibilities for commencement, making students a part of the process, a brilliant and respectable way to handle the situation. CWU should be more like ASUWB and send out a survey to graduating seniors, requesting input and preference. How can such a decision be made without the voices of students being involved?

Even though commencement is a year-long planned event and there are dozens of small details, the university should continue to plan for it, even in such uncertain times. The university has said if a commencement ceremony is planned last minute, it won’t be as extravagant.

But seniors don’t need big-name speakers at commencement. We need an opportunity, when it’s safe, to walk across a stage and hear our names be called, loud and proud for our friends and families. We’ve earned it.

Aeryn Kauffman
Columnist

The best way to protect yourself from coronavirus is to stay at home. If you aren’t in a position to do that, though, the next best way is to wear a face mask.

On April 3, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a new recommendation for people to wear face masks in public. Before recent studies, it was believed face masks did little to stop the spread of coronavirus unless you were symptomatic. Now, we know that isn’t true. A “significant portion” of those with coronavirus can be asymptomatic, according to the CDC. In a March 31 National Public Radio (NPR) interview with CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield, it was revealed up to 25% of people with coronavirus remain asymptomatic. For those who are symptomatic, they can spread the virus before symptoms show.

“Of those of us that get symptoms, it appears that we’re shedding significant virus in our oropharyngeal compartment, probably up to 48 hours before we show symptoms. This helps explain how rapidly this virus continues to spread across the country,” Dr. Redfield said.

This is why the CDC advises us to use face masks when grocery shopping or, for those of us still required to, while working. The primary way the virus is spread is through respiratory droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, and face masks protect against this, according to Dr. Daniel Griffin at Columbia University.

However, there’s one major problem with the public’s need for face masks. Medical staff need them much more. Medical masks are in extreme short supply. Some hospitals are so desperate for supplies, one UK hospital received a donation of medical scrubs from a fetish site, MedFet UK. Another adult entertainment site, PornHub, donated 50,000 medical masks to New York City nurses, doctors, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, fire inspectors and firefighters. Yeah, things are getting weird.

At the grocery store, I can’t help but notice most people are wearing medical masks such as N-95 masks. We need to donate these to hospitals

Nicholas Tucker
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Mariah Valles
Columnist

CWU needs to stand behind the senior class of 2020. When the health orders are lifted, CWU must honor its graduating class with an in-person commencement ceremony.

Seniors will not get to spend their last three months of college surrounded by friends. They won’t get to attend grad kick off or award ceremonies. For some, their final quarter of college will be spent in a bedroom, trying to figure out how to complete online courses for the very first time, just in order to graduate.

CWU should not hijack such a monumental day from students. As a first generation college graduate who should graduate Summa Cum Laude (3.9-4.0 GPA), it’s deeply disappointing that the university would outright cancel such an event instead of postponing it. The health order cited for the cancellation of commencement doesn’t say events can’t be postponed or rescheduled.

We've earned it.
Track and Field athletes sent home from Alabama day before national championships

Austin Lane  
Sports Editor

Seniors Erykah Weems and Samantha La Rue woke up early on March 11, got on a bus to SeaTac and flew to Birmingham, Alabama for the NCAA DII Indoor Track and Field National Championships.

The event never happened.

The national championships were scheduled to take place on March 13-14 featuring DII track and field athletes from all over the country competing for prestigious national placement. Weems qualified for the 60-meter hurdles race and La Rue qualified for the shot put.

After landing in Alabama, getting to the hotel, and even getting in some pre-meet preparation, the two women were notified they will not have the chance to become national champions.

On March 12, the NCAA announced they would be cancelling the remainder of all winter and spring championships. Instead of competing in day one of the championships on March 13, Weems and La Rue flew back to Washington with feelings of confusion, disappointment and disbelief.

"My first reaction was actually that it was a joke," La Rue said. "I totally thought people were just pulling our chains... after that wore off I was just really, really sad and very worried about how we were able to get home.

COVID-19 has made an unprecedented impact on athletes around the world. All professional sports have been cancelled and many fans have been living life without anything to watch on TV for the past couple weeks.

While many athletes have more years of eligibility, senior athletes usually don't. Weems felt like the national championships were going to be her last chance at competing during an indoor season.

"It was a little emotional because it's my senior year and running that week was going to be my last time running indoor," Weems said. "I didn't really know how to express my emotions but just hoped for the best."

With the outdoor season cancelled as well this year, both Weems and La Rue had to explore options for continuing to compete at the collegiate level.

Weems was granted an extra season of availability as she pursues her master's degree next year at CWU. Originally, she was going to pursue her master's degree in 2021-22, but thought it would be best if she altered her plan and began pursuing it next year due to receiving an extra year of athletic eligibility.

However, La Rue said she can't compete next year.

"I know for me personally in my journey, I'm probably done. I probably have nothing else left for me to go back to," La Rue said. "Even though athletes have been granted that season back, I academically cannot make it happen so I know that I'm just done."

In a previous interview with The Observer, Weems said going into the event that as long as she trusts the process, she will accomplish all she wants to accomplish. Even now, after her season was cancelled, that belief never wavered.

"100% believe in the process. I believe that God has a purpose and he's opening doors and shutting others," Weems said. "I do believe there is a purpose and I still trust in the process to see where I will be next."

Also in a previous interview with The Observer, La Rue said before the flight to Alabama that her main goal was to walk away from the event knowing she did the absolute best she could.

"I had all these goals laid out and things I wanted to do and knowing that it can't happen... it's a really terrible feeling knowing I did have these plans and they were cancelled and it's not working out," La Rue said. "I just have to accept it and I can't put any regret on it because it's not my fault, it's just the way the world is turning right now."

Tweets from athletes

LeBron James
@KingJames

Man we cancelling sporting events, school, office work, etc etc. What we really need to cancel is 2020! 😂. Damn it's been a rough 3 months. God bless and stay safe.

10:24 PM · Mar 11, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

223.8K Retweets 991.2K Likes

JJ Watt
@JJWatt

This tweet was ahead of it's time.

11:54 AM · Mar 16, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

10.6K Retweets 107.1K Likes

Shawn Kelley
@kelleytime27

Im booking all my flights for the rest of my life this week! Finally the #coronavirus is giving back 😊

6:19 PM · Mar 11, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

1 Retweet 20 Likes

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Senior baseball players weighing option whether or not to return next year

Mitchell Roland
Senior Reporter

With their season ending early, some members of CWU’s baseball team are still processing that they may have already played the final game of their collegiate career. Their season came to an early end on March 12 after the GNAC suspended all spring competitions due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Senior outfielder Justin Hampson said players have reacted to the news differently. “A lot of my teammates are just figuring it out,” Hampson said.

The team learned their season was cancelled while preparing for a series against Montana State University Billings. Hassell said as players saw other leagues being postponed, the team realized the GNAC would soon be next. “It felt inevitable,” Hassell said. “I think we were all really crushed.”

Senior outfielder Jaden Hassell said when players received the news that their season was suspended, they were unsure of the next steps. “We didn’t know what to do, we didn’t know how to react,” Hampson said.

Hampson and Hassell both said the team was playing their best baseball of the season just before the cancellation. While the team had gotten off to a slow 6-12 start to their season, they split four games against Western Oregon, which ended up being the final series of the season. Hassell said splitting a series against a team like that showed they were just starting to reach their potential as a team.

“We were coming into our own,” Hassell said. “It’s the one year where you want everything to go right.”

With all gyms in the state closed for the foreseeable future, both players have found creative ways to stay active. Hassell said he has been running and filling buckets with water “just to lift something heavy.”

Hampson said he has been doing home workouts and is just trying to stay as active as possible. “It’s real tough being locked up,” Hampson said.

Hampson said he is still trying to figure out exactly how he feels about their season being cancelled, and that he can’t really put it into words. “But this season may not be the end to either athlete’s collegiate career. An NCAA ruling gave spring sport athlete an extra year of eligibility, meaning both Hampson and Hassell could come back next year to play.”

Hassell said he plans on returning to Ellensburg next season. “I made a decision I want to come back next year and do it right,” Hampson said. “It doesn’t feel like it ended right.”

Hassell said he is still debating whether to return for another season and has yet to make a final decision.

The team is considering heavy decisions and everyone is trying to navigate what has become a new normal for athletes around the world.

“Sports teaches us we’re going to get knocked down and struggle,” Hassell said. “Sports has prepared us for something like this.”

Opinion: With no other options, WrestleMania was a light in the dark

Austin Lane
Sports Editor

Yes, ESPN is constantly airing classic games. Yes, the NFL draft is still going to happen and is right around the corner. But there’s something different about live sports. There’s something special about knowing you’re reacting to a major event at the same time as millions of other people. Sure, rewatching the Cubs win the World Series in 2016 is something to watch. But I already watched it live, screaming at my TV even though I’m a diehard Mariners fan. Rewatching it now takes away that special feeling.

Needless to say, as a baseball fan and March Madness fan, I am going through basically a mid-life crisis. There’s something that helped out through these tough times, even if for a little. And that was WrestleMania 36. I usually don’t watch wrestling anymore, but I used to with friends when I was in high school and I remember watching a little bit of WWE in middle school as well. Since around my senior year of high school, I haven’t kept up much. However, WrestleMania is one of the events I try to watch every year. This year it was obviously different. Having no fans in the crowd was weird, it was an obvious drawback that was going to happen with all the current circumstances.

This year it was obviously different. Having no fans in the crowd was weird, it was an obvious drawback that was going to happen with all the current circumstances. It reminded me of the hopes I had for nearly all sports just a short three weeks ago. Nearly all sports fans were hoping that sports could continue at least on TV with no fans in attendance of MLB, NBA and NCAA basketball games. But as things became more clear, so did the decision to outright postpone sporting events. So here we are, waiting until the day an MLB game is on our screen. Waiting for the NBA playoff seeding to be finalized. Hoping the NFL season isn’t postponed. I have come to accept that I will have to wait for professional sports to hit my airwaves again. Until that day comes, WrestleMania gave me everything I had hoped for.

The event gave me something to watch, laugh at, be amazed by and at the end of the day, be entertained by. It was a live sport in a time where live sports don’t even exist. I didn’t care about the crowd not being there, I didn’t care that it wasn’t actually in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers football stadium like it was originally supposed to be. It was entertaining. The matches were fun to watch. The acting was good and the directing was even better. People are going through tough times right now, and I think Wrestlemania did a good job of taking things off the mind of a lot of people, even if it was just for a weekend. And for a sports fan like myself, waiting for the day I can enjoy sports again, WrestleMania was a spark of light that shined brightest even on the darkest days.

I have come to accept that I will have to wait for professional sports to hit my airwaves again. Until that day comes, WrestleMania gave me everything I had hoped for.

Teagan Kimbro/The Observer
Since we saw you last, WE BINGED... a lot

Here are our Staff Favorites:

AERYN RECOMMENDS
- BETTER CALL SAUL (NETFLIX)
- GIRLS INCARCERATED (NETFLIX)
- TREMORS (NETFLIX)

AMY SUGGESTS
- LA CASA DE PAPEL/MONEY HEIST (NETFLIX)

CASSIE BINGED
- SCHITT’S CREEK (NETFLIX)

BAILEY SUGGESTS
- SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET (NETFLIX)

ABBY RECOMMENDS
- SOUTH PARK (HULU)
- BOJACK HORSEMAN (NETFLIX)
- RICK AND MORTY (HULU)

MITCHELL SUGGESTS
- JOHN MULANEY: KID GORGEOUS AT RADIO CITY

AUSTIN RECOMMENDS
- THE WALKING DEAD (NETFLIX)

CASEY SUGGESTS
- THE LEAGUE (HULU)

NICK BINGED
- THE GET DOWN (NETFLIX)

RIEL BINGED
- MY HERO ACADEMIA (HULU)

BEKAH BINGED
- THE OFFICE (NETFLIX)

MARIAH RECOMMENDS
- 90 DAY FIANCE (HULU)

TEAGAN SUGGESTS
- FOREVER (AMAZON PRIME)
- BIG MOUTH (NETFLIX)

Until next time