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ROUGH START

University makes changes to enforce on-campus COVID-19 policies

By Michael J. Collins
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RICHARD FRANK GREGOR

Students stand in line at the food court in Downing Student Union on Aug. 27. After several days of long lines that go against social distancing guidelines, the food court at DSU has been updated with barriers and markers to keep students spaced apart.

Patrons at the Downing Student Union food court saw long lines during lunch hours that raised concerns over social distancing among students.

On Thursday, DSU staff removed all chairs and tables from the area in order to accommodate larger crowds. Patrons in line still largely stand within 6 feet and can often be seen with masks not covering their mouth and nose.

Josh Sellars, a sophomore marketing major from Indianapolis, said the changes made to the layout make him feel better about being in the food court during busier hours.

"I think it's a necessary precaution that's safer than everyone in the commons just standing around," Sellars said. "[I worry] if I'm around a bunch of friends at one time, but I'm usually pretty good about wearing my mask."

The Big Red Restart policies, implemented prior to the fall semester, required masks indoors and social distancing at all times on campus, but no individual or group of individuals is tasked with enforcing it.

In an Aug. 21 meeting, WKU President Tim Caboni explained that individuals on campus would be responsible for enforcing mask-wearing and social distancing among peers.

"I would say it's incumbent upon every person," Caboni said. "Not in a mean way. But in a direct way, to your neighbor, colleague, random person, particularly inside a building, which is when you must put your mask on. If you see someone not wearing a mask, just ask."

Caboni said that mask-wearing must become the norm on campus through

strict enforcement by the university as a whole.

"The way in which you create norms is when they're violated, there's some gentle or strict sanctions," Caboni said. "And that's not done by any individual, it's done by the entire culture, entire organization."

Students who refuse masks may be asked to leave class and reported to the Office of Student Conduct, according to WKU's website. Faculty who refuse masks may be reported to the Office of Human Resources.

WKU announced 86 new cases of COVID-19 within the WKU community Friday, all of which were students. Twelve students are currently in isolation due to positive test results, and all students living in Greek chapter houses must undergo mandatory testing.

WKU's Big Red Restart Plan did not require students to undergo testing before returning to campus.

In contrast, both the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky required all individuals to be tested before returning. The University of Kentucky is seeing a rapid spike in cases despite its efforts, with 112 new cases reported Friday, the Lexington Herald-Leader reported.

WKU will update the running case total on the Healthy on the Hill dashboard on Sept. 4.

Talisman Photographer Richard F. Gregor contributed to this article.

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What a WKU student learned from her experience with COVID-19

By Maggie Thornton
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Getting diagnosed with COVID-19 taught a WKU student a valuable lesson.

Daphne Conner is a sophomore from Bowling Green studying entrepreneurship. Over the summer, Conner contracted the coronavirus.

"It's easy to just see Bowling Green as a college town, but it's a community for people of all ages, older and younger, so

it's important to just be smart and think about the families it could affect, not just yourself and your friends," Conner said.

Conner said she attended a gathering to celebrate a friend's birthday in June. A few days later, she found out that two people who attended experienced symptoms but attended the gathering anyway. She and her friends began panick-

ing and decided they had to get tested.

Conner thought her allergies were just acting up from seasons' changing, and if she hadn't found out she was exposed, she would have continued with her life as normal. As soon as she found out she could have been exposed, she knew what she had to do. She called her boss and went to Graves Gilbert Clinic.

Once she received her positive results, she contacted everyone she had been around to make sure they knew. It was the day before Father's Day when she received the results, and she originally had plans to go home to see her dad and grandpa.

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"It was sad," Conner said. "I missed out on important family time, but there was no one else to blame but myself. I'm glad I found out in time because I would've hated myself if I had seen my grandpa and exposed him."

Conner said just walking up the stairs or taking her dog outside took her breath away. Her symptoms were similar to having severe allergies, but she knows that it could have been much worse. She said she was lucky to have mild symptoms.

Conner still has not regained her sense of smell.

"It sucked," Conner said. "I felt terrible, and I had to miss out on a few weeks of work, which means I didn't have pay during that time either."

The health department sent Conner a survey every day to keep track of her symptoms. Once she went 48 hours without any, she was able to go back to work. Conner has paid more attention to her body and her symptoms since then, which she thinks is important for everyone to do.

Conner said she has been encouraging all of her friends to get tested — even if they only feel one or two symptoms — so they can keep themselves and those around them safe. One of

her friends recently experienced pain in his throat and felt sick, so she told him he has to get tested and take it seriously because it comes at no cost to anyone.

Conner said that if she could go back and change anything she wouldn't have hung out with all of the people she did over the summer and she would have been smarter. She said that since her experience with the coronavirus, she has been much more mindful about all of the necessary precautions.

She has been on campus twice since school started, and both times she said she saw many students walking around with no mask and standing close to-

gether. Conner said she wishes people would be distant in public spaces and wear their mask so they can avoid the experience she had and protect those around them.

"While it's unrealistic to expect everyone to listen and stop having gatherings, the least students can do is wear their masks at all times in public and be aware of how they act in shared public spaces," Conner said. "Just cover your face, keep your distance and be respectful of others around you."

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Programs that rely on hands-on learning adapt to virtual courses

By Dylan Harkreader & Debra Murray

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Courses difficult to learn virtually, such as nursing or theatre, have struggled to transition into a hybrid class format due to COVID-19.

Classes started just last Monday, so students and teachers are adjusting to hybrid classes, which especially affects programs that rely on hands-on learning, like WKU's nursing, theatre, physical therapy and exercise science programs.

Theatre and dance

WKU's Department of Theatre and Dance made multiple adjustments to their learning process for the fall semester.

The first week of the semester had a busy start. A meeting including all students with majors or minors in dance was held through Zoom on the first day of school. Dance company meetings were held through Zoom later in the week.

Auditions were moved from the dance studio to Van Meter Hall. The department separated the audition into three different calls. The protocol for auditions usually had more than 40 individuals in one building. This year the most an audition call would have would be around 17 dancers. A total of about 50 students auditioned for the Fall 2020 semester.

The department's convocation was also held through Zoom instead of in Russell Miller Theatre.

Dance courses are heavily movement-based. The majority of classes are face-to-face. Amanda Clark, associate professor and dance program coordinator, primarily teaches jazz and tap technique for the department as well as dance theory. Clark and the rest of the faculty jumped into the new ways of teaching in a coronavirus world.

"We wanted to provide security and stability to students and not stress them out anymore than the situation had done already and provide continuity," Clark said.

Zoom had its share of setbacks for the program. Students would dance on screen for their classes, and timing would interfere with how long other students could dance. These technical difficulties caused a challenge for classes at the time. More concerns included logistical challenges with audio.

"I think that one of the tools in the performing artist tool belt is that we are resourceful," Clark said.

The dance department prepared for the fall return of students on campus by locating their classes in different areas. Five classes were moved to Preston Center in a wide-open gym. Two courses were moved to Russell Miller Theatre in the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center.

A couple of classes remain in two dance studios in Gordon Wilson Hall. The class will have half of the students in one studio with three instructors and the other half in the opposite studio zooming the first studio. The class will switch in the second gathering of the week.

All dancers are required to wear masks during the class, including while dancing. Faculty had the help of professional development webinars and a group of "Doctors for Dancers" to make sure every precaution was taken.

Other components of the theatre program were also adjusting to hybrid classes. Shura Pollastek, costume design, costume technology and stage makeup professor, adjusted her classes of students creating costumes into smaller class sizes or virtual classes.

"[In] my costume technology class, there are normally 12 students in the costume shop, so what I did is I split them half and half," Pollastek said. "Anything I lecture or demo I convert to video so when they come into class, they're just doing it. We've spread out the sewing machines and the other supplies so there is enough space for six students at a time to work [while] social distancing."

Pollastek also teaches stage makeup during the spring semester, which she had to adjust to completely online last spring after WKU shut down in-person classes.

"If we are still social distant in the spring when I teach stage makeup again, it will have to be over Zoom because we'd have to be very far apart from each other to be safe and with masks,



ANNA LEACHMAN

Since many classes are now only available online, many classrooms and lecture halls remain unoccupied on Western Kentucky University's campus.

we wouldn't be able to do anything other than eye makeup, so it really would not work," said Pollastek.

Stage makeup requires students to use their full face, and sometimes practice on other students, so masks and social distancing make learning difficult to do in person.

"Another part of stage makeup is seeing how students look under stage lights — not under their bedroom lights shining on their face — so they do not get the complete experience," said Pollastek. "Although, they were certainly able to learn the technical skills just fine."

Physical Therapy

COVID-19 brought few changes to lecturing and great modifications to hands-on learning in the Department of Physical Therapy. Video lectures were present in learning before the pandemic began. First and second-year PT students had their hands-on classes postponed until a few weeks before the fall semester began. Three weeks prior to the fall semester both students and faculty came back to campus.

These students were required to pick back up on the lab skills from the spring. The continuation of the courses fell into the first week of the fall semester. Some third-year students had their clinical rotation adjusted into a shorter span of time.

Face-to-face labs returned in the fall. First and second-year students enter labs in small sections. Labs have remained the same in numbers by having 14 or 16 students working in pairs. The department has imputed a requirement to stick with whichever individual students choose as a partner at the beginning of the semester. The change helps minimize contact with other students.

Beth Norris, physical therapy department chair and professor, along with the rest of the faculty, are glad to be back in their regular routine. Norris and other PT professors were ready for their return to the previously closed building at the beginning of August.

"Until something is taken away from you, you don't realize how much you take it for granted," Norris said.

The guidelines for all PT labs include the six-foot distance between lab sections as well as masks being worn at all times. Sanitizing equipment is the key to keeping the department safe, considering all appliances are involved with the lab courses.

Nursing

Nursing students at WKU experienced several changes made in their hands-on work and testing. The nursing department will continue to have its exams via Zoom. Students within the program will

have to take their exams on their iPad while having another electronic device to video their work area when the exam takes place. A normal in-class exam would usually be proctored.

"Incompletes" were given to students in the Fundamentals of Nursing lab who were not able to proceed with the spring semester. Many practice skills like injections and inserting catheters could not take place then. The students would only have their skill videos to watch from home.

The months of July and August brought opportunities for spring students to finish out their courses. The department made the effort to have all students come back to campus. Small groups were required in order to maintain safe protocol.

Dr. Crista Briggs, professor for the nursing department, said she was missing the human connection with students and her routine for work.

"It has made me more thankful for typical semesters when I am able to go to my office on campus and focus my heart and mind on teaching, service and scholarly activities," Briggs said.

Exercise Science

Students in the exercise science program also had to adjust to new learning formats. Rachel Tinius, who teaches an exercise testing and prescription class, explained transitioning her class to an entirely virtual format. Many other exer-

cise science courses transitioned to the hybrid format.

"It's very difficult because my class is an exercise testing and prescription class, so it has a very large hands-on component," Tinius said. "It's challenging to try to help students get those skills while keeping them out of the lab and not getting to see them face-to-face."

Tinius also said how she feels that online learning can lead to difficulty learning the class work in ways that don't occur in traditional classes.

"I think we do our best to teach things as close to the same [as traditional classes] as we can, with a live zoom or a recorded lecture," said Tinius. "There is just no way it can become a discussion-based learning environment, and it's really hard for them to ask questions on the spot. And so a lot of students just don't ask then, so then they don't understand it as well."

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KEEP IT GOING

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, many facets of the world we live in are too important to be inaccessible. Businesses are deemed essential if they provide services, or items, that humans cannot live without, like food or healthcare. The people who are vital to the function of these essential businesses continuously risk their wellbeing to go to work. For some employees, this stems from wanting to enhance people's quality of life. For others, it's to ensure the wellbeing of their dreams. Regardless, people continue to work despite the ever-present societal changes around them.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM • PHOTOS BY ZANE MEYER THORNTON

- Jason Musser began repairing cars 20 years ago when he couldn't afford to continuously pay for maintenance on his first car. At the time, he had no intention of making it his career, but when he discovered his distain for teaching after earning a Masters Degree in Mathematics from Western Kentucky University, he fell back on automobile maintenance to make ends meet. After roughly three years of working in peoples driveways, Musser decided to open his own business, Musser Motorsports. Musser feels fortunate to be able to continue working while many other businesses are forced to close their doors. "If you read on business, sometimes businesses are compared to a baby. This is my baby, you know, and if I don't care for it in the right way, it's gonna die," said Musser.
- Matt Brown is a Recreational Administration major at Western Kentucky University who has been working at a local Kroger while he attends school. "When I came back to work after spring break, it was hectic. When the store closed at 10 p.m., there were still cars out here like it was a Sunday afternoon on the Super Bowl," said Brown.
- Manoj Kumar Patel moved to Bowling Green from his home in Zimbabwe five years ago. In his native country Patel was a professional contractor, but he gave up his profession and moved to America to help ensure a better future for his daughters. Last year, Patel built his own liquor store, WK Liquor's from the ground up. Since many students from Western Kentucky University have returned home for the semester, much of Patel's clientele is gone, but he chooses to remain optimistic and positive. "If you take Zimbabwe for an example, there's a total lockdown. In a sense, things are way better than elsewhere. I mean, Europe's went through a total shutdown too. Things could always be a lot worse," said Patel.
- Jessica Smith is a Licensed Veterinary Technician and Assistant Office Manager at Greystone Pet Hospital in Bowling Green. Ever since she was a child, Smith knew she wanted to work with animals. Even though some days are long and tough, she loves helping animals and forming relationships with their owners. Smith says new business guidelines have greatly effected the way her, and the rest of her staff, operate. "We are doing curbside only, so no one is allowed into the clinic. Clients know their pet the best, so not having them in the clinic to help explain things has slowed things down just a little," said Smith. New hours of operation have also greatly impacted veterinarians in Bowling Green, but the offices in town formed a plan to make sure all animals are able to get the care they need, whenever they need it. "There are five clinics in Bowling Green that take turns seeing emergencies after business hours. We also rotate weekends, so whoever is on call for the weekend is on call Saturday and Sunday. The clinic on call is responsible for seeing emergencies from the other 4 clinics as well as their own," said Smith.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What is ISEC?

A guide for students

BY: Courtney Hurst, Robin Lester, Trenton Peyton

The Intercultural Student Engagement Center, also known as ISEC, promotes a culturally inclusive campus environment, cultural awareness and competence, inter-group dialogue, engagement and intercultural interaction and supports lifelong learning about self and others. All of these are key components to making campus culturally aware and a safe space for all students.

Through our center we offer a numerous amount of programming, initiatives and resources that benefit our students academically, culturally and socially. The ISEC Academy, the Pride Center and The WKU Center for Academic Resources & Success (WKU CARES) are just a few examples. It is our ultimate goal to see our students walk across the stage!

If there is any way we can be of any assistance or if you just want to stop by, our center is located on the second floor of Downing Student Union room 2041. Monday through Friday we are open from 8 a.m to 4:30 p.m. Remember, ISEC is where scholars are made!

What the semester will look like for ISEC and ISEC Academy

The Intercultural Student Engagement Center and ISEC Academy will look a little different this year due to COVID-19.

ISEC Academy opened its doors to 77 incoming freshmen who identify as students of color (Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American and Multiracial) and/or who are first gener-

ation, Pell eligible and have need with their transition, persistence and graduation from WKU.

The ISEC staff made many changes to the orientation weekend to meet the COVID-19 guidelines. Move-in was a drop and go process. All students were provided a mask and sanitizer and smaller activities to provide social distancing.

ISEC Academy had a successful orientation weekend for Cohort IV.

During the fall semester, ISEC will host programming. Many of these programs will require pre-registration if students would like to attend.

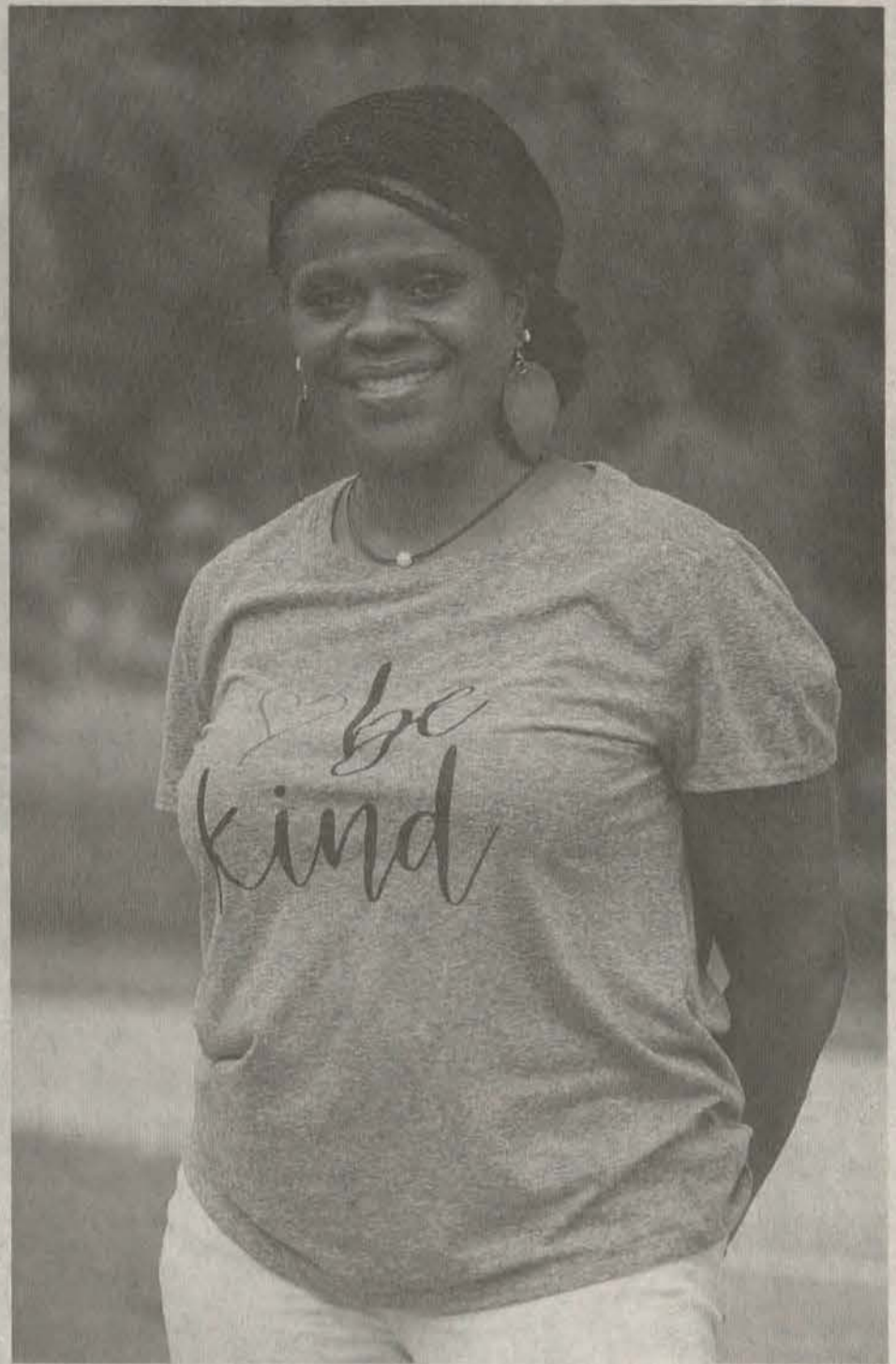
Students can follow the Intercultural Student Engagement Center on social media to stay up to do on events and programming.

WKU Center for Academic Resource and Success

The ISEC Academy application window has closed, but we still offer WKU CARES for those students who want to be a part of ISEC.

The WKU Center for Academic Resources & Success, also known as WKU CARES, is an initiative to assist students that identify as underrepresented and/or who are first-generation, Pell-eligible and have some need with their transition, persistence and graduation from WKU.

Students will have the opportunity for transformation related to personal development, academic engagement, campus involvement and opportunities for experiences related to culture and diversity. WKU CARES offers year-round enrollment for all student classifications.



Martha Sales, Executive Director of ISEC- PROVIDED BY ISEC

OP-ED

WKU grad student: It's on the administration, not the students

BY: Julie Sisler

Illustration by Alex Cox

"Can you even believe how stupid the freshmen are on campus? They're barely even following the COVID-19 guidelines!" This question was posed to me during a casual conversation with a friend about the seemingly impending shutdown of WKU's campus, which they, along with numerous other members of the WKU community, have attributed to the "stupid" actions of this year's freshmen class.

My response? "Yes, I can believe it. Can you believe how stupid the administration is for expecting anything less?"

Members of the WKU community from the top down have been quick to point the finger at this year's freshman class, calling them out for their lack of adherence to the university's COVID-19 guidelines.

Not following guidelines that were put in place for our safety is, of course, troubling. However, I can't help but wonder if perhaps we should have expected this all along.

My freshman year, I couldn't wait to escape my parents and get out into the world, just like every other freshman. I wanted to meet new people, try new things and get the college experience that I had dreamed of for years. These students are no different.

People are shocked that freshmen got to campus and began engaging in the very same activities we all did during our own freshman experience.

Who can really be surprised that they're in groups of more than 10 when they've been starved of social connection for months? Who can be that shocked when they're not going straight from class back to their residence hall rooms when they've been stuck inside, under their parents' thumbs for five months? How can it be stunning that they aren't here to focus on school and only school when that's all that they had at the end of last semester? Their senior year was ruined, so why is it startling that they're willing to do whatever it takes to make sure their freshman year isn't?

Sure, it can be said that they should know better. But, truly, should they? Not to sound belittling, but these are teenagers. Nobody ever said that logical reasoning was a strong suit of teens, so why would that change now?

Furthermore, the rational part of the brain isn't fully developed until age 25. College students are at the age where emotions control actions more so than logic. Surely, school administrators that

have studied higher education and college students would know that... right?

In the Aug. 21 Herald interview with WKU President Timothy Caboni, Caboni said, "I know there are folks on this campus that want to have some group of people identified as the mask patrol, the reality is just like wearing it is on each one of us, so is helping us as a community comply with that expectation."

The issue with this statement is that the WKU administration is in charge, not the students. It's the administration's job to make the right decision for all of us, and it's their job to enforce those decisions.

If students barely adhere to the policies about not drinking alcohol on campus, why is it surprising that they're not adhering to the loosely enforced poli-

cies regarding COVID-19 precautions?

Yes, we all had to deal with the COVID-19 chaos last semester, and yes, we are all continuing to deal with it. However, handling a global pandemic while at home in high school is completely different from handling it while on your own in college.

When it comes down to it, little was done to prepare these freshmen, and now, we are all dealing with the aftermath. They were thrown into the lion's den that is a college campus during a global pandemic, and now they're getting called out for not knowing how to handle the internal struggle between what they're told to do and what they want to do.

None of these circumstances make it okay for students — freshmen or not — to ignore protective measures in order to benefit themselves, but it does make

one wonder if students should be taking all the blame for a university's poor planning.

Of course, this is no excuse for students to not follow COVID-19 guidelines.

We all need to demonstrate personal responsibility and take precautions not just to keep our campus open, but also to protect all members of the WKU community. Wearing a mask, social distancing and washing hands are simple ways that students can make campus a healthier place for all.

Perhaps instead of turning to the freshmen, and furthermore, instead of lumping all of the students following guidelines in with all of those that aren't, we should be turning to the administration to ask: How did you not see this coming?



SETTING UP: Helton and staff theorize potential season starters

By Casey Warner
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T-minus 11 days until the Hilltoppers will take the field for the first time as they kick off their 2020 season at the University of Louisville.

After a delayed start to camp and an unexpected canceled practice last Thursday, WKU has fought through the adversity and continued to make the most of its shortened camp season. Two weeks into fall camp coaches and players alike have been able to get a better idea of what this team is about.

Saturday marked the first live scrimmage of fall camp for the Hilltoppers.

After a 109 tackle season in 2019 and being named a Conference USA honorable mention, senior linebacker Kyle Bailey was just thankful to be playing the game he loves, when some other schools aren't so fortunate.

"With all the confusion going on and people not knowing if we are going to have a season ... just being able to come out here and fly around just took a lot of stress off of everybody," Bailey said.

With a scrimmage now under their belt, WKU's playmakers are making themselves known. Defensive coordinator Clayton White was satisfied with what he saw from his defense on Saturday.

"It was one of those days where we just had to do our job," White said. "Our offense has so much talent. I thought Roger Cray made some plays. He had two pass breakups."

The senior defensive back played in seven games for the Hilltoppers last season totaling two interceptions and five pass breakups. One of seven senior defensive backs on the Hilltoppers' roster, Cray will be an important component to a WKU defense that has a variety of experience returning.

"There's definitely new things that we're putting in every week," White said. "We want to play a different coverage behind blitz patterns this year than we did last year just to mix things up."

From a team standpoint, the biggest benefit for this WKU defense is going up against a talented offense with

depth day in and day out of practice. An experienced offensive line and shifty skill players make for a great challenge for the defense.

"You wouldn't really know who to cover if I'm going against those guys," White said. "It's made us a lot better. They've definitely improved, and you can definitely feel it. This year they have a lot more speed and a lot more talent on the football field."

Although there lies an enormous amount of talent on the offensive side of the ball, the one glaring question is still who will be the starting quarterback come Sept. 12.

In recent interviews with head coach Tyson Helton last week, Helton has said that all five quarterbacks on the roster have been getting reps in practice and that no starter has emerged yet.

On the other hand, hearing what offensive coordinator Bryan Ellis and players have to say about the situation makes things all that much clearer.

"Being the quarterback's coach, I was thrilled that we didn't have any turnovers at the position," Ellis said. "I was impressed with [Tyrell] Piggy [Pigrome]. I thought Piggy did some really good things."

Turnovers or lack thereof will be a key this season for Tyrell Pigrome if he does indeed win the job.

Coming into 2020 Pigrome has a career touchdown to interception ratio of 9 to 10. While Pigrome's ability to take care of the ball is still up for discussion, his teammates have been impressed with what they have seen from the graduate transfer in practice.

Senior center Seth Joest praised not only Pigrome but what he has seen from the quarterback room in general.

"The whole o-line did really well, and of course Piggy's really stepped it up," Joest said. "We're pretty deep at quarterback right now, and that guy is doing good."

It is worth noting that upperclassmen Davis Shanley and Kevaris Thomas have plenty of ability to win the job, just not the mobility and play-making upside Pigrome has shown thus far.

Senior defensive back Antwon Kincade compared practicing against Pigrome to how the team has been preparing for a



STEVE ROBERTS • WKU ATHLETICS

Western Kentucky University football practice on Aug. 29, 2020 its first scrimmage of the season in Houchens-Smith Stadium

Louisville team with a mobile quarterback.

"Piggy is an incredible quarterback, especially on his feet," Kincade said. "Not only on his feet, he's more dynamic with his touch pass. That's what helps us prepare for quarterbacks like that."

With their season kickoff under two weeks away, the Hilltoppers will look to tie up some loose ends before they travel to Cardinal Stadium. In a game in which the Cardinals are expected to be heavily favored, expect WKU to prepare for the

upset in the coming days at practice.

"Our first scrimmage against our defense last year, we darn near didn't get a yard," Ellis said. "I'm really proud of our staff and our head coach of where we've come in a year's time and how we really got a chance to be good on offense."

Football beat reporter Casey Warner can be reached at casey.warner@yahoo.com. Follow him on Twitter @thecaseywarner.

COLUMN



By Kaden Gaylord
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Views from the bottom of The Hill Making it safe to attend games

As a former football player and current fan, there's nothing I would like more than for things to return to normal so we can enjoy the season like usual. But with that being said, having an abundance of fans in the stadium is not what's best right now.

Now before you get angry and tell me I'm wrong, hear me out first. WKU Football is set to open its season on Sept. 12 against an in-state opponent, the University of Louisville. The Cardinals announced last week that they are allowing 30% capacity in their stadium, which is about 18,000 fans.

Does that sound safe at all? I know Houchens-Smith Stadium is nowhere near the maximum capacity as the formerly known Papa John's Stadium, as WKU's stadium only holds about 22,000 fans. But that doesn't even account for all of the students who squeeze into the student section.

High school sports have returned already, and there have been problems when it comes to making sure everybody is following the rules.

The athletic director at American Fork High School in Utah had to stop their football game due to fans not following the mask and social distancing requirements. Their tickets even gave them specific areas to sit so that distancing would be assured.

How can WKU ensure that people will stay socially distant for a three-hour game? How can they ensure fans will wear their mask? I just don't see how that's plausible especially in a college dominated state like Kentucky and a WKU "ride or die" city like Bowling Green that tailgates every weekend.

As someone who's lived on campus for three years, I know students will tailgate and not do it safely, not to mention the Greek life scene's parties.

I don't mean to present an apples and oranges situation, but the NBA bubble is very successful right now partly because there are no fans. Up until this point, no player has tested positive for COVID-19, and they're thriving.

We've seen multiple football pro-

grams across the nation have players get COVID-19. Oklahoma had to send a whole position group home because all of them except one were diagnosed with the virus.

WKU head coach Tyson Helton said the team has had multiple cases, some with symptoms and some asymptomatic. Putting fans in that environment is adding fuel to the fire.

WKU Athletic Director Todd Stewart announced last Thursday afternoon that they plan to mirror a similar capacity as Louisville.

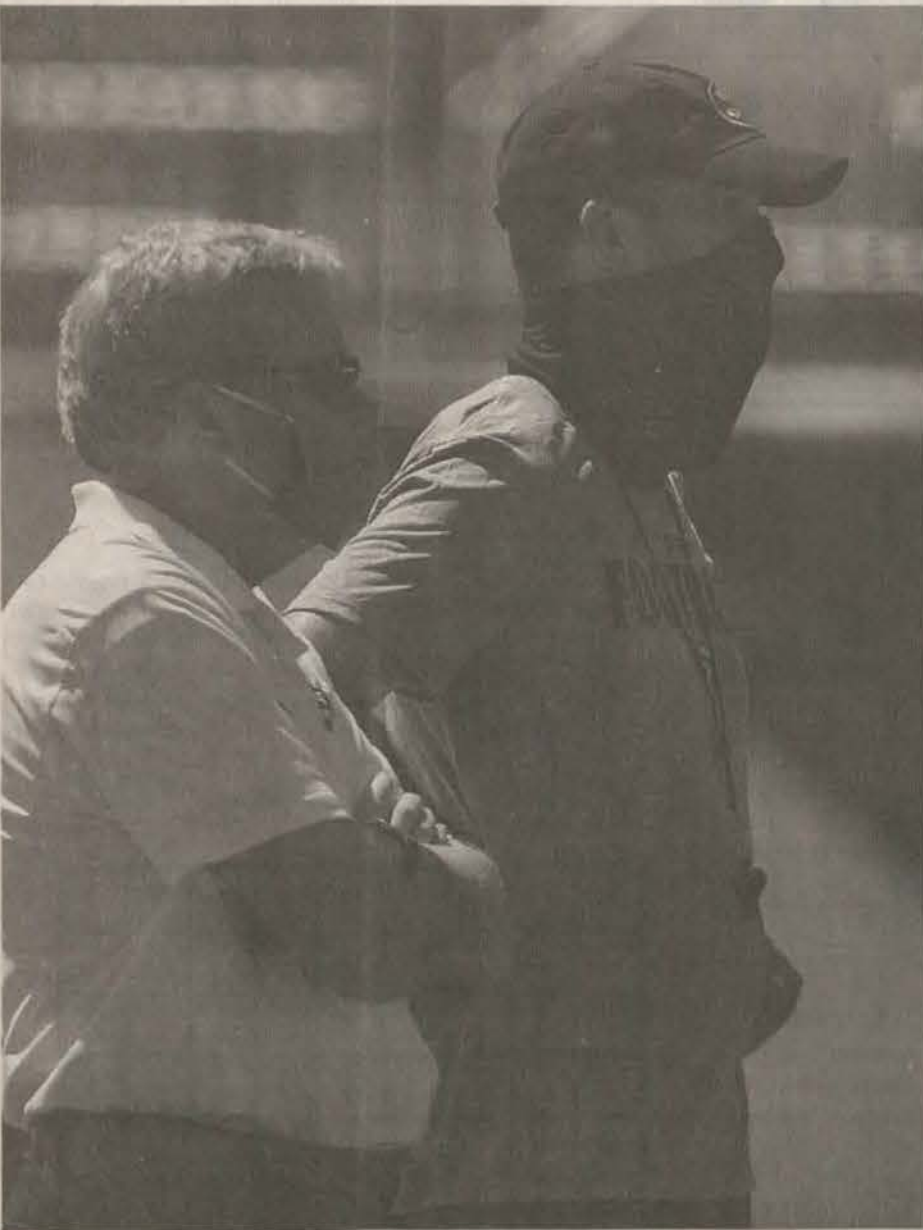
30% of 22,000 is 6,600, which is a lot. If high school games are having problems even with a lower number in attendance, how will colleges be able to handle it, especially since COVID-19 numbers have risen in Kentucky for the past couple of months?

In Lexington, the local health department reported 423 cases at the University of Kentucky since Aug. 3. All of this is before football games have started, so what makes us think the numbers will decline with thousands of people gathered in a stadium or outside tailgating?

Let's not forget that these universities are trying to have in-person classes and stay open as long as possible. Bringing more bodies to these already stuffed campuses is just asking for the virus to come by and visit.

If throughout the season everything is going well and players are staying healthy, maybe the school can let some fans in. But until then it should be in the best interest of the athletes and the school to keep fans enjoying football games at home.

Men's basketball beat reporter and sports columnist Kaden Gaylord can be reached at kaden.gaylord559@topper.wku.edu. Follow Kaden on Twitter at @KLG3.



STEVE ROBERT • WKU ATHLETICS

Athletic Director Todd Stewart and Tyson Helton stand on the sideline at practice, Aug. 17, 2020

