

FCS ADA



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Over the last decade, technology has grown at an astounding rate. From the creation of social media channels like Twitter and Instagram to students utilizing laptops as their primary learning method, it has been an important part of higher education institutions for years. This was most evident in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced universities across the nation to pivot suddenly to online learning.

UIW was ready. We have more than 20 years of experience in the online learning setting and were able to shift within the span of two weeks to a completely virtual experience.

Still, in athletics, we needed to ensure that our student-athletes were set up to succeed. The health and safety of our student-athletes has always been our top priority, but we wanted to ensure that they had the necessary tools to be successful in the classroom, too. We utilized our coaches as the primary points of contact with

our student-athletes to determine their needs. Did they have access to a computer to use? Did they have reliable internet?

Throughout this process, our campus partners were a huge help. We were able to supply student-athletes with the tools they needed, whether it was a laptop or an internet hotspot, to be able to keep up with their classes.

But throughout the pandemic, technology has been about more than maintaining good grades. Across our athletics department, we pride ourselves on building great relationships with our staff and student-athletes. Technology has played a major role in that, as coaches had to move team meetings, study halls, and even “game nights” to a virtual setting. Zoom became a favorite application for many, as it allowed that visual component of building relationships.

From an academic standpoint, our study hall model shifted into an objective-based format. Like our coaches, our academic advisors have hosted study hall as well as “open door hours” through Zoom. This allows group settings and one-on-one interactions with our student-athletes. For our new students, this has been vital in helping them build those

relationships with people who are here to help them succeed. For those who were on campus when the pandemic started, it has been an adjustment, and I’m proud of how our student-athletes have risen to the challenge.

This fall, we returned to in-person classes for the first time since the pandemic began. Throughout the last year and a half, we have learned a lot about technology and how to better use it to our advantage, both in the classroom and in promoting our athletics department. When we announced our plans to join the Western Athletic Conference in July 2022, we were able to share a video of WAC Commissioner Jeff Hurd welcoming us to the league. He later conducted a Zoom interview with our local media, something that we may not have thought of doing two years ago.

The future at UIW is bright, and I look forward to continuing to find innovative ways to help our student-athletes become champions in the classroom, community and in competition.



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