

FCS ADA



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The DakotaDome has been an icon in the state of South Dakota since coming online in 1979. Almost 30 years later, it remained the home venue for nearly half our programs in addition to housing all athletics department staff and training facilities.

Then USD began its transition to Division I in 2008, and we've been fortunate enough to bring online a new arena, soccer complex and outdoor track and field facility.

Enter COVID-19 and a new challenge – not one facility for all, but all of our programs in one season at the same time. Plus, how can our student-athletes train, compete and practice in the safest way possible, and can we create an environment that offers a home-court advantage.

Colleagues, we all comprehend the obstacles set in front of us, and in some ways I believe we will all be better on the other side for meeting them.

I write this at a time when we had to inform our football staff and players that the season opener they had been gearing up for was postponed. Another adjustment to make.

We have been anxious to debut a \$26 million renovation of our DakotaDome to fans, a good problem certainly. But while the renovated space will work wonders for many of our programs, it also eliminated space for others. And while football and track coaches debated when the turf should go down, we've had to get creative in providing opportunities for others.

To that extent, we've sent tennis and track and field athletes 30 minutes out of town one way to practice while sending softball players 30 minutes the other way. Tennis and swimming and diving have held more competitions 60 minutes north in Sioux Falls than in our hometown of Vermillion. The coordination is taxing, and I don't know if we've always made the right calls, but having those conversations between staff and coaches has pushed us to be better, and I believe we will be.

I've reflected more on my time as a student-athlete this year than perhaps any other. The challenges we faced then seem pale in comparison to what we are asking of our young people now. Testing, masking, isolating, and adjusting to ever-changing goal posts. We work tirelessly trying to create a sense of normalcy in abnormal times for them. Their resolve is remarkable.

At the end of the day, I'm proud of the efforts of everyone associated with our department, community and state in moving us forward with concerns for the health, safety and wellness of our student-athletes a part of every conversation. I see, hear or read similar stories across the country and I laud the efforts of athletics departments, conferences and the NCAA to move us forward.

At some point, I will appreciate the challenge to tear up our old playbook and create a new one. Many of you have helped us write those first pages, and it's that community I'm truly grateful for. Thank you, and Go Yates!

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