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A Decade of UREC

George Burquest, Volunteer Reporter

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of the Eisiminger Fitness Center. This milestone allows for an opportunity to reflect on Seattle University's Recreation Center's (UREC) mission: to inspire, educate and empower the Seattle U community to live happier, healthier and more successful lives.

UREC is a new experience for many students on campus this year. While UREC's physical indoor gym spaces were closed for most of the 2020-21 academic calendar, they still held outdoor play hours at Logan Field. As a result, many first years, sophomores and transfer students are now truly discovering all that UREC has to offer.

The Assistant Director of Fitness and Facility Staff at UREC, Melissa Wessel, remarked on how the pandemic affected UREC's operation.

"Being closed for so long was very hard, but it gave us time to make important changes and updates, as well as the opportunity to pause and ask, 'are we being exactly who we want UREC to be?'" Wessel said.

Wessel touched on programs and opportunities UREC is looking forward to starting now that UREC has more services open. While certain limitations are still in place due to COVID-19 protocols, she highlighted how now is the time to get back into the swing of things.

"The objective is to start at the base level of all we have to offer as we gradually move towards getting people not only back in the gym, moving their bodies, but also back into community with each other," Wessel said.

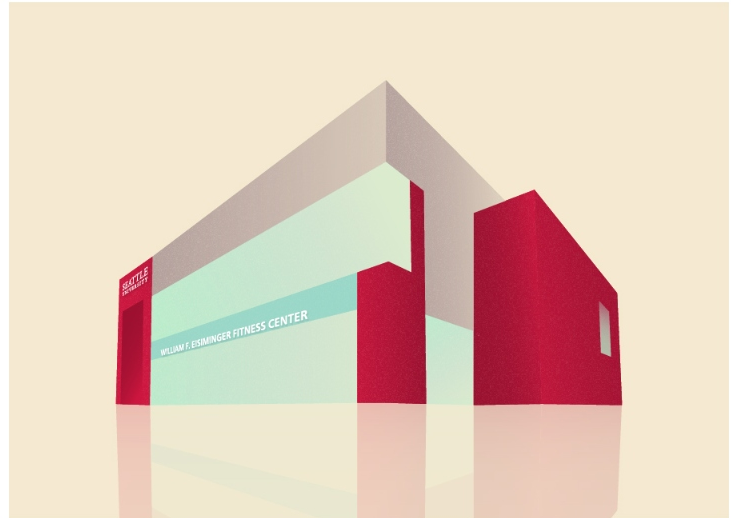
History Department Chair, Thomas Taylor, could not wait for UREC to re-open. In his 34th year at the university, Taylor reminisced how he has arguably spent more hours on the basketball court than anyone else in the history of Seattle U.

Taylor admits that he hasn't been back to UREC since its reopening due to problems he sees with scheduling. There is limited space in the RAC gym as well as the North and South courts due to their usage by multiple sports teams.

"If I'm going to return to UREC, I need accountability in holding to schedules if the courts are promised to be open," Taylor said. "My bottom line is that they could gain a lot of good will if they could provide at least modest access to the better facilities in the North and South Courts."

Interim Director of UREC Kirsten Schumacher is more positive about UREC's comeback.

"I think that COVID-19 was a great reset for all of us, we get the opportunity to be what we want now," Schumacher said.



Andrew Mori

As UREC works to reset and get back to a sense of normalcy after being closed, the goal is constant improvement. Schumacher spoke of several changes that have been implemented because of COVID-19, such as hybrid programming, which UREC hopes to maintain.

Given the number of students who are not on campus, more students can be served virtually. Schumacher poses the question; why not continue doing fitness classes online, competitive programming online and even getting folks outside together online?

“Within the last 10 years, as the fitness world has changed, as movement needs have changed—you have to come in and step on a treadmill to call it your exercise—we have made a lot of updates creating functional spaces, where people can do their own workouts,” Wessel said.

Outside of COVID-19 related changes, UREC has paid careful attention to the needs of its members.

“Responding to the input of students and other members of UREC is the best way to make a more comfortable and safe environment for everyone,” Schumacher said. “We want UREC to be a place where your voice is heard and you are cared for as well.”

UREC and the Eisminger Center’s 10-year anniversary serves as a time of reflection and change after a long and difficult closure. UREC continues to strive toward maintaining its goals of promoting personal health and fitness to Seattle U community members. For UREC, rebuilding of community comes with a renewed commitment to keep up with evolving needs and a palpable spirit of cooperation.