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UREC Adjusts COVID-19 Measures, Remains Open for Community

Matt Parks, Staff Reporter

After reopening in-person fall 2021, Seattle University's Recreation Center (UREC) has worked hard to maintain a safe environment in which community members can exercise as part of the upkeep of their physical and mental health.

Since UREC welcomed back community members in September, many COVID-19 safety policies have been implemented in accordance with university and state standards. To enter the facilities, a Seattle U ID card and approved Safe Start Health Check must be presented. Masks must be worn at all times while participating in indoor activities and social distancing is highly encouraged.



At the start of winter quarter, new safety measures were enacted in light of the omicron surge. Director of University Recreation Kirsten Schumacher explained some of the adjustments that have been made in order to keep community members safe during their workouts.

"As we've transitioned into winter quarter, now with omicron, we have shut down some machines on our cardio floor just to make it so that we have more distancing," Schumacher said. "Our treadmills can be pretty close to each other and with folks still just having the cloth masks, we were a little bit nervous about the transmission of COVID-19, but we also recognize that gyms across the state and country still remain open as long as we can continue to clean things properly."

Cleaning has been essential to keeping the gym open and safe for the well-being of everyone in the Seattle U community. With COVID-19, heightened methods have been introduced, including deep cleaning to all equipment and double-sanitizing anything touched by visitors.

First-year Business Management student and UREC employee Frederick Von Brandenfels detailed his responsibilities in keeping the facilities and equipment clean and safe.

"Every 15 minutes, I go around and wipe down equipment that has been used that other people haven't wiped down," Von Brandenfels said. "I make sure that people are socially distant, that people's masks are all the way covering their mouth and nose area. Just making sure that people aren't overcrowding other rooms like the studios that we have. And making sure people are being aware of the situation and policies we have in place."

When the school announced that classes would be going online for the month of January, UREC had to reduce their hours due to limited staff members being on campus. As of Jan. 31, regular hours have been restored.

One of the biggest adjustments that was put into effect during the virtual classes period was the limiting of group games and sports, most notably basketball. Second-year Clinical Psychology major Joe Gormley was playing 3 v. 3 basketball with some friends when he was asked to stop. While he completely respects and understands the rules, he wishes there was some consistency among COVID-19 prevention policies.

“I understand where they’re coming from and I don’t blame them for what they did or think it’s too dumb, but I will say that if you’re not going to allow this [basketball], then why do you allow other things that have similar transmission rates [treadmill and weightlifting],” Gormley said. “I mean, maybe an issue with basketball is sometimes people pull their masks down or whatever to catch their breath. I can understand that, but I would say that that same thing might happen while [one is] working out and others are still within close contact. At the end of the day, I try to take my own personal feelings out of it and understand that the COVID-19 policies are there for a reason.”

Working out is a vital component to maintaining good physical and mental health, and is part of the importance of UREC. This reality has reaffirmed UREC’s mission to be a resource for the Seattle U community.

“People need to move, people need to be moving their bodies and we’re a space that can be really good for folks as mental health,” Schumacher said. “That’s what’s always been a UREC thing—how we want to be there to help support getting people moving and active and off of their screen the entire time. And so if we can do that safely, which we’ve been shown that we can, I think it’s a wonderful resource for students to get to maintain.”

Students have enjoyed the benefits of having UREC, especially during the winter months. Kirsten Brown, a first-year forensic psychology major, shares that she has adjusted to the COVID-19 policies and that she is grateful to have access to the facilities.

“I’m pretty used to working out with a mask on, so there’s no problem for me,” Brown said. “I feel safe and I’m just really happy the gym is open.”

As COVID-19 cases continue to decrease, UREC is looking forward to safely bringing back the fun with group activities such as basketball, volleyball and intramural sports. More opportunities will be available for students and faculty looking to be a part of the traditional UREC outdoor trips in spring quarter.