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Welcome Back



Letter from the editors

Welcome back Sharks!

I think it is safe to say that last semester ended unexpectedly. We exchanged our classroom lectures for Zoom calls, handshakes for waves and hangouts for physical distancing; but we adapted, and most importantly, we can begin to return to a sense of normalcy — the new normal.

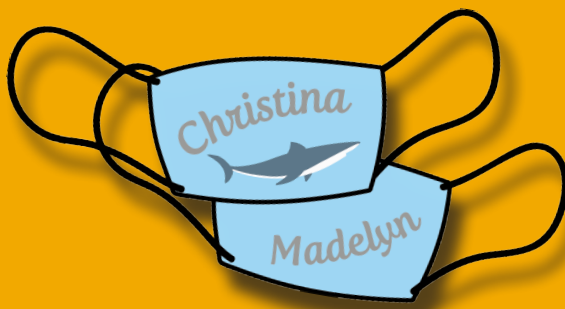
It's a phrase we have heard a lot these past few months, and, although it's been frequently used to describe our current state of affairs, it does hold a positive affirmation. We will find a new normal and adapt to the situations at hand. However, it will take some time to get there.

As we all tread these unfamiliar waters, feel free to take The Current on that journey with you. We will try our best to be there for you as a reliable source of information and a worthwhile distraction to the unprecedented times we are living in. We will continue to be the source for your new favorite artist, your local guide on all things South Florida and, most importantly, your voice in the NSU community.

As we promise to be there for you, our NSU community, we implore you to also do the same for each other. Stand together in these tough times with your classmates, friends and staff by respecting each other's space and health — both physical and mental. It's no secret that this semester is going to be challenging, but if we work together and support each other, we will get through this — so let's show the world what we can accomplish when the Sharks band together.

Stay safe and healthy Sharks, and help us all turn the tide.

With hopes for a successful semester,



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News Briefs

Covid-19 changes on campus

With students returning to campus for the fall semester, there have been a number of changes around NSU's Fort Lauderdale Campus to keep students, faculty and staff safe. Some notable changes on campus include a limited number of people in elevators at one time, as well as new signage across campus. These signs serve as gentle reminders to those on campus to take proper precautions while on campus. All individuals in public spaces around NSU's campuses are required by NSU Public Safety to wear a face mask or face covering. Additionally, numerous offices around NSU's campus, including the Office of Career Development and the Office of International Affairs, are now available for virtual meetings and appointments via Zoom upon request on their respective sites.

Weeks of Welcome

While NSU may look and feel a little different this semester, Weeks of Welcome, a tradition on NSU's campus, is still being held Aug. 13-30. This year, events for Weeks of Welcome are being held both virtually and in-person. Some events include Unified Greek Council Table Talk on Aug. 18 at 7 p.m. and a Commuter Love Car Show on Aug. 19 at 2 p.m. Sharkapalooza will be held on Aug. 21 at 6 p.m. Sharkapalooza, features a student organization fair and resources for new and returning students. This year, Sharkapalooza will be held virtually, so all NSU students can feel comfortable attending. The full list of events for Weeks of Welcome can be found at Nova.edu/WOW. Some events require that students register prior to the event on the Weeks of Welcome website.

Online mental health workshops for Covid-19

In response to NSU students who are having individual challenges while self-isolating, the College of Psychology is offering live discussions on mental health issues that may stem from COVID-19. These discussions, labeled as Shark Chats, will be held through September and October. The first Shark Chat will take place on Sept. 25 at 12 p.m. with the title of "Smoking, Vaping and COVID-19: A Dangerous Mix." Space is limited for each chat. Students are encouraged to register as soon as possible for the event online. A full list of the Shark Chats and registration is available at nova.edu/sharkchats.

NSU sports takes it slow

By: Christina McLaughlin
Co-Editor-in-Chief

In our daily routines and in the media, it has become the end all and be all of 2020. However, as individuals and communities have weathered this pandemic, it seems like sports — professional and collegiate-level — have also had their share of challenges throughout this pandemic.

On July 18, the Sunshine State Conference President’s Council announced the postponement of all scheduled competition in the fall sports season. For NSU, that affects men’s soccer, women’s soccer, women’s cross-country and women’s volleyball. But what exactly does that mean for the fall sport student-athletes?

Michael Mominey, director of athletics, said that the postponement of the fall sports NSU offers is with the intent to play those seasons in the spring, assuring us it is not a cancellation.

As of Aug., NSU’s athletic department is in discussions with other teams in the Sunshine State Conference over scheduling and related planning for the fall sports with an anticipated schedule for the spring. These fall student-athletes are returning to campus as originally scheduled and are following a plan of action for socialization, which follows the NCAA board of governors, state, county and CDC health guidelines. This plan is known as the Return of the Sharks Athletic Action Plan.

“We are moving the fall sports to the spring and moving at a slower pace. We are being very prudent and methodical in our approach. [The Return of the Sharks Athletic Action Plan] allows the student-athletes to get acclimated to campus and slowly phase in practices and workouts,” said Mominey.

Mominey explained that this process will mimic the pre-season routine, in what would be their season, to have them prepared for their

anticipated season-openers.

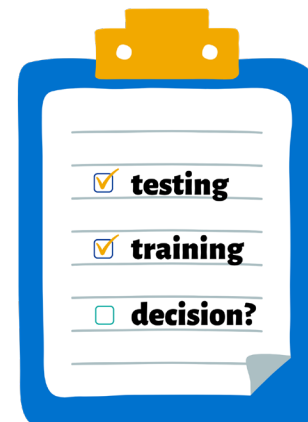
For the winter sports, namely men’s and women’s basketball and swimming, they are slated for their regular season starting in November.

“With the winter sports, we still anticipate them playing in their regular season. Whether that happens or changes, we are preparing as [originally scheduled],” said Mominey.

On Aug. 7, NSU announced that it will suspend the women’s rowing team indefinitely starting with the 2020-2021 academic year, citing COVID-19 related budget reductions as the contributing factor in making this decision. NSU will honor the individual student scholarships of the women’s rowing team through the graduation of those students.

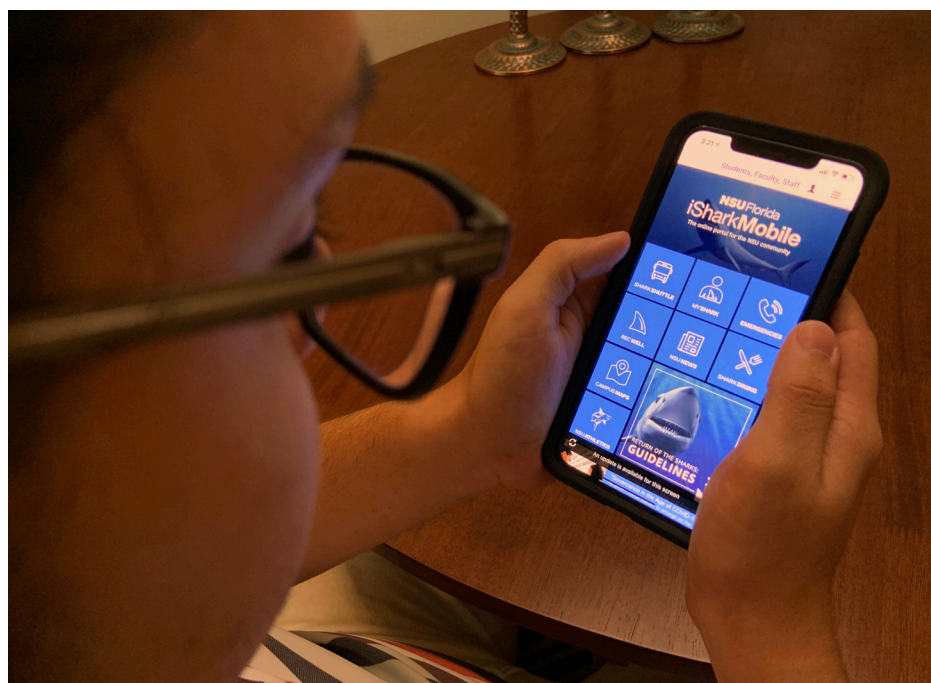
“Our number one interest is [student-athletes] health, welfare and safety and it is my

belief that education helps alleviate fear. Through this plan, we will educate our student-athletes, coaches, trainers and staff [on proper procedure and best-available recommendations]... But, if we can’t commit to the protocols that NSU is putting in place within the guidelines of the CDC and Broward County, we might as well call it a year right now,” said Mominey.



iSharkMobile revamp

By: Rick Esner
News Editor



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Taking a peek of the new iSharkMobile interface

While students were away from campus over the summer, NSU’s iSharkMobile app received a major update. iSharkMobile is an application available for both Apple and Android devices that allows students to access information from all corners of NSU’s community. Self-described as the online portal for the NSU community, the application allows students to access information on a variety of

topics. Ranging from the SharkShuttle and RecWell to Shark Dining and NSU athletics, the app has a plethora of information at any student’s fingertips.

Students who already had the iSharkMobile app downloaded may remember the previous version of the app containing all the features stated above. However, this new version has an excess of new features, making

it worth another look.

The first and most notable of the changes is a new look and interface to the app. The app now launches on a slick homepage with easy to access landing pages for quick access to information. The landing page tabs are easy to read making the app abundantly useful in stressful moments where a student may need information fast.

Another new feature of the updated app, and arguably most important, is the Return of the Sharks tab. This section of the app allows its users to complete a self-assessment, provides information on masks, COVID-19 reporting forms, and general guides for both employees and students alike.

“[The Return of the Sharks tab] is right now one of the most important things we can put in anywhere, whether it is in our websites or this mobile application. Just awareness of what we should be doing to reduce the spread of the virus,” stated Julio Morales, chief technology officer at NSU.

The app is not intended for students to simply look at the Return of the Sharks tab once and call it quits, but instead is meant to be a constant help those on campus stay safe. This new tab provides reminders on proper safety precautions, as well as updates to the overall pandemic and how it relates to NSU.

“I think the most important parts of the application are the reminders, the alerts, the

self-assessments and the reporting from it. You’re going to get up to date information on how we are navigating through this,” Morales explained.

Students at NSU are encouraged to download the app, not only for the information that is available or for COVID-19 help, but because the app was specifically made for NSU Sharks.

“It is your information highway to NSU as a whole... That’s what is going to help you navigate through NSU, whether you are on-site or not,” said Morales.

Morales further explained that the updated app directly took feedback from students, meaning that the new features that were implemented came straight from the app’s intended audience.

“We also put into [the app] your ideas and your feedback. What you see is a culmination of the surveys and what students have been asking for. That’s what you see here... We are driven by the student population to make the necessary changes,” said Morales

The iSharkMobile app can be found on a majority of smartphone devices through the App Store or the Google Play Store.

FOLLOW US TO KEEP WITH WHAT'S CURRENT

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Christina McLaughlin collection of masks

This semester may look a little different. With that, it may be helpful to have clarification and some general guidance and suggestions as to how NSU is dealing with COVID-19. In a recent conversation with Beth Welmaker, director of Environmental Health and Safety at NSU, The Current found answers to some of those concerns.

How can students best protect themselves and their health this semester?

“If a student wants to check their temperature at any time [in the residence halls] they have the ability to do that. All residence halls [with a reception desk] will be equipped with a thermometer for student-use. Coming back to campus in this environment, you should have a wardrobe now of personal face coverings, with NSU providing two [reusable face coverings] to each student. [Students] should make sure that they have personal cleaning supplies on hand so they are not relying on anyone else. NSU does provide those supplies on campus, in the classrooms and throughout campus, but again, I would encourage everyone to have their own personal supplies to clean up their own areas. Coming prepared to campus with their own ‘personal supply kit’ is a good idea. The time to get a thermometer is not when you are feeling sick because we don’t want you trying to get those supplies when you are not feeling well. Having those supplies on hand is something students should consider.”

The Return of the Sharks Student Guide suggests getting a flu-shot. Why should a student consider that exactly?

“I’m not a MD, but [primarily], it’s because the symptoms of the flu mimic COVID-19. It’s a personal decision. However, we know when flu season is, and in order to avoid the confusion or complexity of trying to discern between ‘are my symptoms flu or COVID-19’, we recommend getting the flu shot. In addition to [discerning symptoms], if you get the flu — which is a respiratory virus — it might put your body in a more compromising position if you are exposed to COVID-19. We want to protect your health and this is just one way you can do that.”

If a student is an allergy sufferer, should they stay home?

“The way the self-assessment is written, it can be challenging for those who have allergies. For example, the questions are asking, ‘Are these symptoms new? Is this a new development? Is this something outside your normal realm of health?’ If there is ambiguity in answering those questions, then we encourage those individuals to get clarification from their health care provider. Hopefully, people can discern between if this is allergies [or another known health condition] or a new unusual development.”

If there are any changes to the campus environment (i.e: increase in cases or shutdowns), where should students look to find information?

“We created our first coronavirus website Jan. 24 2020 and we didn’t know it would become a pandemic. From that time, we have created a banner on the top of the website that you can quickly access to receive current updates. We also have the ability to send out NOVA ALERTS and notifications through the iShark app. So, if we need to take any sort of swift action, we have the ability to do so in a variety of ways to get information out quickly. We are prepared to do that if the time comes. This is all things that are outside our control, but we are optimistic that, with the safety measures that we put in place, a [swift action] is not going to be necessary.”

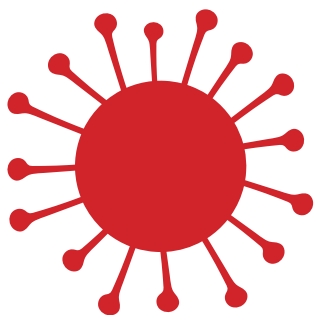
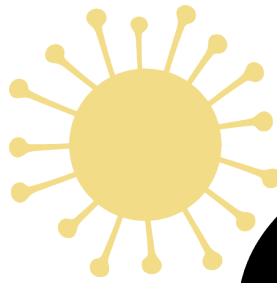
What if a student’s roommate or someone a student interacted with has symptoms or is tested for COVID-19? What should a student do if they have symptoms or are tested for COVID-19?

“When an individual is presenting with COVID-19 symptoms [or has been tested, but has not received results], we are going to assume it is COVID-19 and have them isolate. You have to isolate for 10 days from when you are feeling ill. So, we start to count down from the first day they presented symptoms... The CDC has updated their guidance and recommends that, when you have COVID-19, you have to self-isolate for 10 days. If you have an exposure to an individual presumed or positive for COVID-19, you have to quarantine for 14 days. It’s the same behavior of limiting interactions, but different terminology. It may be helpful to remember ‘When I have COVID-19, I isolate. When I’m exposed, I quarantine.’”

When should I get tested and where can I receive a test?

“We have on-site testing for all students and we accept all major health insurance coverage. If a student is feeling unwell, they can call telehealth and a doctor will go through the symptoms with them, and if they agree the symptoms are COVID-like, then they will schedule them for testing on campus.”

Conversation

By: Christina
Co-Editor

What exactly is the self-assessment on the iShark app?

“It is required that, before coming on campus, every individual, whether you are a student, staff or employee, perform a self-assessment. We don’t want individuals coming to campus that are unwell. Right now, we are mostly concerned with the COVID-19 symptoms, but in general, we don’t want people coming to campus and getting other people sick. If individuals are not feeling well, they should not be coming to campus. The online assessment on the iShark app does not track information. So, it really becomes important that individuals ‘do the right thing.’ It is designed to be a tool — a resource — to help refresh everyone on the current symptoms and the right actions to take.”



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Students conversing while maintaining safety protocols

How exactly will contract tracing work for NSU community cases?

“In the state of Florida, contract tracing is only legally allowed to be done by the Department of Health (DOH). NSU supports and helps the DOH by providing them information when we can and when we have the information. So, we will not be doing the contact tracing phone calls, but we support their efforts. An example might be that a student tests positive and attended class. So, we will provide the DOH with the roster of those students in case the DOH wants to contact those individuals. All NSU classrooms are reconfigured to CDC guidelines of six feet apart so if a student tests positive the whole class doesn’t necessarily need to quarantine, but the DOH could still call those students to check up on them.”

How can students best prepare for this semester amongst this pandemic?

“Residential Life has asked every student to come up with their personal COVID-19 plan. So, every student should have on file what their intended plan should be if they personally contract COVID-19. For the students that are not living on campus, they should consider their own plan. Everyone should consider their own plan in case they contract the virus and what their intent is, whether that be to self-isolate in their rooms or travel home, etc. Some people could have a very mild COVID-19 experience and would be able to take classes from their room and return back to campus later. It may be a really good strategy to practice redundancy and make a plan if you are involved in organizations to refer work to others or plan for someone to step in, in case someone were to get sick. Planning like that is now necessary in the times that we are facing.”

How much of an impact can an individual student’s effort make?

“The impact and power that students possess in the direction that this is going to take is significant. There is a campaign to “Turn the tide” and I truly believe that students have the opportunity to turn the tide on this. They have the opportunity to not follow physical distancing regulations and that may pose the biggest challenge to students this semester. But we had data from monitoring the trends that show that, as long as we respect physical distancing, we are not spreading the virus. It will be interesting to see, as students return to campus, whether or not we will be able to contain an outbreak — if one presents itself — or if we are able to successfully contain it and prevent its spread — and that largely depends on the decisions of the individuals themselves.”

If students have any other questions or concerns please email covidcase@nova.edu .

about COVID

McLaughlin
-in-Chief

