Hello Everyone!

This summer has certainly been one of great challenges and changes to our lives. I hope that this letter finds you well and safe. The Big Sky Conference (which includes Weber State University) has postponed the Football Season this fall. Many other conferences have done likewise across the nation. Plans are in the works to have an eight-game Football season this Spring (2021) followed by playoffs for the FCS Division, culminating in a championship game. As you may know, Weber State finished 3rd place in the nation last season and they are hoping for the chance to win it all this year. The team, coaches, and athletics have expressed their love of and support for the Weber State University Wildcat Marching Band and look forward to seeing us at the stadium and around campus this year.

So, what does the football season being postponed until the spring mean for the WSU Wildcat Marching Band? Excellent question. As you are all aware, we are facing unprecedented circumstances and challenges. What we do as a Marching Band is crucial to campus culture and activities, particularly at football games and Pep Rallies. The Wildcat Band is easily the most visible performing arts group on campus, and as many veteran band members can attest, we make a real difference in peoples’ lives. What we do as a band is always important, but it is more important than ever in these troubled times.

Due to the postponement of the football season, we will not hold our usual Band Camp (August 15, and 17-21) and Drumline Camp (August 12-14). WSU Band Camp is cancelled this year. I realize that many of you have worked very hard to get time off of work, and various other engagements, etc., to make yourselves available for Band Camp. We are so grateful for your efforts. Your safety is our top priority. Without impending games to perform for, in the coming weeks—and in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic—It seems most prudent to avoid putting you all together for forty-five hours next week.

Band Leadership (drum majors, staff, and section leaders, etc.) will still plan to meet sometime on Monday, August 17th, or Tuesday, August 18th. Please contact me for more information.

The Marching Band will still exist this fall and we will do everything we need to, in order to be successful and safe. As more details become available concerning the schedule, you will be informed. We are going to adapt to our circumstances by adding some new aspects to the course, while temporarily putting some others on hold. The course will have two primary aims. We will strive for excellence in every aspect of musicianship, and we will utilize the marching band as a teaching and learning laboratory for band members—particularly for music education majors and any interested in learning what it takes to build a successful marching program. The Marching Band course (MUSC 1752/3752) will function as a Hybrid Marching Band/Pep Band, preparing as always to participate in athletic and university related events and provide musical and visual entertainment for these events. The Marching Band course will also function as a Marching Band Methods course, providing opportunities for students to have hands on learning experiences with: drill writing; marching band/pep band arranging; rehearsal techniques; booster programs/fundraising; grant writing; recruitment; and various other aspects of running a successful band program.
The marching band is large enough that we cannot fit the entire band into the rehearsal hall (room 133) safely, while practicing social distancing. As a result, the band, in its entirety, will meet for each rehearsal on the PT Field (Practice Field with Artificial Turf, south of the Browning Center). In addition to regularly scheduled rehearsals on the field, there will be various days reserved and specifically scheduled for indoor or virtual classes when students will work on projects that do not require the whole band to meet. In addition to those scheduled indoor/virtual meetings—when there is inclement weather—rather than staying out in the rain or snow, risking life and limb (and very cold fingers), we will head inside with the folks working on Marching Band Methods Projects, and all others will be excused.

I realize that these are big changes to how the marching band usually functions here at Weber State. We did not come to these decisions lightly and we are still adapting to our changing situation. Given the fact that there are no impending football games (and therefore performances) scheduled at this time, some may elect to drop the course. Please know that we still want you to be a part of the band, and that we very much hope you will be with us at any of the Spring Football games (or non-conference games in the fall, if they should take place). I will keep you all informed as I learn more.

In spite of the difficult circumstances this season, the Weber State University Wildcat Marching Band will still be here as a refuge for you in these troubled times, and as an outlet for your amazing musical talents. I have always felt that Marching Band is a place where—aside from having wonderful and unique musical experiences—you can make lifelong friends; develop strong social and leadership skills; and gain confidence in who you are as a human being. These are things that you will continue to utilize and benefit from every day of your life, long after your days as a Wildcat Marching Band member.

Again, your health, safety, and all-around well-being is our top priority. The Department of Performing Arts (DPA) faculty has met many times each week and sometimes each day throughout this Pandemic to ensure that you get the most out of your education here at Weber State University. The costume shop, for example, has been working tirelessly to provide masks designed specifically for wind players following the trends with the latest studies (of course they are purple with Wildcat Logos on them), as well as other PPE equipment such as Bell covers for instruments, etc. The DPA and Browning Center have spent many hours developing protocols and implementing plans to keep you as safe as possible. Signage has been placed throughout the building to help us maintain social distancing. Forgive the platitude, but in these challenging times, I think it truly is uplifting to know that we are in this together and that we are all working hard to help, encourage, and protect one another.

If you have questions or concerns about marching band, symphonic band, percussion ensemble, tuition waivers, private lessons or anything else, please feel free to contact me. If I can’t help you, I will direct you to the person that will best be able to do so. I can’t wait to see you all for our first rehearsal on Monday, August 24, 2020. I will be sending a syllabus your way, which will include the most up to date information I can provide about the course, rehearsal schedule, learning outcomes, and any scheduled events or pending/TBA events.

Best wishes,
Sam Bryson

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