

NEISA Winter Meeting

Commissioner's Report – December 7, 2021

Submitted by Mike Kalin

After a long hiatus for most, competition resumed and spirits were high. I've spoken to many coaches who reported that their teams were beyond grateful for the opportunity to get back on the water and compete. There are, however, still some struggling fundamental and regional teams that suffered some setbacks because of the pandemic, and have yet to regain their footing.

In the first year of competing in the nationals qualifying system, I've noticed some interesting things. First, it's fantastic that NEISA will be able to showcase their depth of talent at national championships this spring; we have the potential for an unprecedented number of teams to be selected for spring nationals. There did seem to be a number of coaches expressing the stresses of the new system and how "every weekend counts".

Nationals dates:

April 23-24, 2022 Women's team race @ Brown;

May 16-18, 2022 Co-ed team race @ Tulane;

May 19-22 Co-ed Fleet race @ Tulane;

May 23-26 Women's Fleet race @ Tulane.

These dates and locations have been put in place for a long time, under a long and exhaustive process including many approvals. In the championship guidelines, which have been voted on and approved, there are guidelines which have acceptable windows for hosting these events. These championships fall in that approved window. Yes, it is true they are about a week earlier than "normal", but it has been deemed acceptable. It is an unfortunate reality in our sport that every year, many student athletes have to contact their professors to seek exceptions on their final exams. Many coaches spend their evenings at nationals, in a local library proctoring final exams from 7pm-10pm. Many student athletes make the incredibly difficult decision about competing with their teams, or staying behind for graduation. There are always teams that struggle with this, and it is an imperfect part of our sport -- shortening the Nationals block would help alleviate this.

Upcoming challenges: we are adding to our sport, without subtracting. Women's team racing is an exciting new addition to our sport; hosting this event on a weekend in April is a good first step, but it doesn't really pass the test of fair and equal treatment to it's co-ed team racing counter-part. The Nationals block is too darn long! Zach and Frank will give an update on a planning committee to which they contribute that will hopefully give us guidance on a new way forward. I won't steal their thunder, but I'll give them some time to elaborate later this meeting.

We are expanding our team racing season and we need to develop umpires to keep the fun and exciting sport of team racing... fun and exciting. We need to think of ways to help Amanda grow her pool of judges and encourage our alums to give back to the sport by getting on the umpire circuit. It's a pretty great deal NEISA offers to umpires.

Upcoming opportunities: NEISA vice president Jack Valentino will present on the exciting new opportunity for fundamental and regional teams that will offer a fulfilling sailing experience to the teams in our conference (and our country) that might not spend as much time team racing.

First ever women's team race at Brown: This will be an awesome event and it's really exciting to see how much women's team racing has developed in the last few years, and more exciting to see it grow and expand.

ICSA executive director search: Unofficial report from Blaine Pedlow: "the timeline has been pushed back 6 months. Also, the reality is that we would probably have been stretched pretty thin budget-wise if we had started someone this winter without any 2021 dues being received in the ICSA. The chair is going to propose at the Winter Meeting that we move forward with the posting and interview process immediately with an intended start date of May 1, 2022 - this allows the individual to be present during the Spring Nationals but not crushed with their admin as a first thing and then also begin their contract after collection of our annual dues. At the Winter Meeting, I will also put out a call for a representative from each conference to be part of the interview and hiring committee. I'd like those folks nominated by Feb 15."