



*Schools of Opportunity that Welcome, Love, and Inspire All Students to Go Places and Do Things that Matter*

For Immediate Release

September 14, 2020

Contact: Richard Franco (602) 764-1530

## **Phoenix Union Releases Plans for Second Quarter, Expansion of Student Services and Activities**

Last spring, when the spread of COVID-19 began, we made two commitments to our community. First was, and still is, that we will always prioritize the health, safety, and wellness of our staff, students, and families. Second, that even during school closures and remote learning, we will never abandon our community - we will continue to provide vital services and opportunities for our students and families. These commitments still drive our decision-making today to ensure the wellbeing of our nearly 4,000 employees and 28,000 students.

As our neighborhoods continue to be among the hardest hit by COVID, it is critical that we do our part to slow the community spread of the virus. That is why we remain in remote learning today. That is also why we have postponed arts, athletics, and activities, and have very limited on-site support services.

Unfortunately, the Phoenix Union community is still experiencing substantial spread of COVID, although there are recent signs of improvement. According to both state and county health data, Phoenix Union remains in the red. In order to reopen schools for learning, Phoenix Union needs to move from substantial spread (red) to moderate spread (yellow), and then from moderate to minimal spread (green).

In July, we promised our community that we would make decisions quarter by quarter, not week by week, in order to give our staff, students, and families sufficient time to plan accordingly. At this point, Phoenix Union will not reach minimal spread (green) in time to launch in-person learning in October and will, therefore, remain in remote learning during the second quarter. We will launch *PXU Remote Learning 2.0*, as we will make several changes and improvements to our current model and begin to phase in more on-campus student opportunities, activities, and support. If, unexpectedly, we reach minimal spread (green) in November, we will consider even more on-site options to end the quarter.

Some of our schools will make slight changes to bell schedules to allow for more time in between classes. We will continue to provide ongoing professional development to our educators, and introduce new and engaging learning activities. We will make improvements to our student and family outreach efforts. We will expand food services. We will launch comprehensive college and career counseling services. We will improve interventions for freshmen and students struggling with grades. We will continue to strengthen our virtual social and emotional supports.

We know that many of our students and families prefer to remain in a full remote learning environment until a vaccine is released. We will have a virtual option available all year. However, we also know that many families are in great need of more on-site options, whether that is to allow families to seek or maintain employment or to simply have a quiet, supervised space for students while in remote learning. Phoenix Union is committed to increasing on-site services throughout the quarter in order to meet the needs of our students and families. We will release details later this month about these expanded services.

Most recent [data](#) released by the county does indicate that the broader Phoenix Union community will likely reach moderate spread (yellow) by early to mid-October - still not sufficient to start full in-person learning but would enable us to increase on-site activities for our students. It is our hope, based on this data, that we will be able to resume some arts, athletics, and other activities in October. We will soon release guidelines for the safe return of the arts and other important student engagement opportunities, such as clubs and CTE programming.

Specific to athletics, if the downward trend of community spread continues, we will begin workouts for all fall sports on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Competitions for badminton, cross country, golf, swim, and girls' volleyball would start the week of October 19<sup>th</sup>. Football would conduct scrimmages on the week of October 19<sup>th</sup>, and competitions for football would begin the week of October 26<sup>th</sup>. This timeline does not align with the current fall sports schedules of the AIA and would result in PXU coordinating its own AIA-sanctioned fall sports season. The AIA will review this proposed fall calendar on Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. Although we would not compete in our usual AIA conferences this fall, we plan to fully participate in AIA conference schedules during the winter and spring seasons. Workouts for winter sports may begin Phase I in October. Again, the return of all fall and winter sports is contingent upon the continued downward trend of the spread of COVID in our community.

Finally, our teams responsible for coordinating the safe return of in-person learning are making plans to resume on-site learning in January. Admittedly, we are not certain what the spread of COVID will look like in the middle of the flu season - health metrics have and will continue to dictate when and how we return to school. However, we know that the best and safest place for our youth is on campus, in classrooms, with their teachers and mentors, surrounded by their peers, engaged in positive and healthy activities. We miss and love our students tremendously, and we know that they wish to return as soon as possible. But we will only return when it is safe to do so.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to the wellness of our community. And we are committed to providing supports, services, opportunities, and activities that keep our staff safe, our students engaged, and our community healthy. Please visit our website, [www.PXU.org](http://www.PXU.org), for future updates.