2019 NWICSA Conference Report

Overall NWICSA regatta attendance was similar to the previous year, except that smaller schools/teams were less represented on the race course. Portland State University is now listed as inactive, and has not attended a regatta in the past 2.5 years. Two of our other smallest schools/teams are tenuously holding on, and have been very inconsistent in terms of participation over the last two years. These small teams are plagued by the usual issues of inconsistent student leadership, little/no school support, little/no alumni base, little/no funding, not attracting students with prior sailing experience etc.

Bigger NWICSA teams like UW, UBC, and WWU are as strong and healthy as ever. They boast deep rosters, strong student leadership, travel actively to interconference/championship regattas, and have been quite successful in their recent fundraising efforts. Similar to the inequality in ICSA, we are seeing a greater disparity within NWICSA between the “haves” and “have-nots.” The inequality within the conference hurts the top (they aren’t being challenged enough at in-conference events) and the bottom (they’re discouraged). The bigger teams realize this problem exists and they’re doing everything in their power get smaller teams to regattas, and their leadership should be commended for it, but it’s usually with mixed results. There have also been student led efforts to find new potential NWICSA teams, although no solid leads exist at the moment.

Despite the recent successes by our bigger teams, the results at the national level are still predicable. That hasn’t helped NWICSA’s image in attracting new sailors. High school sailing has grown a lot in the Northwest over the past five years (almost doubled in size), but we’re not seeing a corresponding uptick at the college level. There are about a dozen former NWISA sailors in NEISA/MAISA at the moment, which maybe 15 years ago would have considered UW, WWU, or Oregon a viable choice. The top-NWISCSA teams have trouble recruiting talented local HS sailors, and some of those that they do land end up not sailing. This is most frustrating of all, and often the given reason is “it’s just not worth my time.”

Our conference exists in a status quo which is not sustainable. As the smallest conference, we really feel it when we lose a team, even a historically small team like PSU. There’s real concern that we could lose another 1-2 smaller teams in the next two years.

Sumbitted: Jan. 19, 2019

Andrew Nelson- NWICSA Conference Commissioner

Shaan Shridhar- NWICSA President