

In the Year 2021: WSU, World, Culturally

2021 was a year of "double duty" for Weber State University. Because of pandemic-related delays the previous year, the university squeezed nearly two full years of activity into one, including two football seasons, a major return to campus life, and several historic athletic milestones.

The "Year of Two Seasons"

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic pushing the 2020 football schedule into early 2021, WSU fans witnessed a rare sports phenomenon:

- **Spring 2021 Season:** The Wildcats played a shortened six-game season starting in February. They went undefeated in the regular season, clinching their fourth consecutive Big Sky Conference title. [\[source\]](#)
- **Fall 2021 Season:** Just a few months later, the team returned for a full 11-game fall schedule. During this season, Jay Hill officially became the winningest football coach in WSU history, surpassing Dave Arslanian with his 54th career victory. [\[source\]](#)
- **Volleyball Dominance:** The volleyball team had a historic 2021, winning a share of the Big Sky regular-season title and hosting the Big Sky Tournament for the first time. They also maintained the longest home winning streak in the nation (27 matches) during this period. [\[source\]](#)

Campus Reopening & Student Life

After a year of remote learning, 2021 marked the official "Return to Campus" for the Wildcat community.

- **Wildcat Block Party:** The university held its 16th annual Block Party in September, drawing thousands of students back to the Stewart Bell Tower Plaza to kick off a more traditional academic year. [\[source\]](#)
- **25 Years of Story Telling:** The Storytelling Festival celebrates 25 years of the event with all sessions held online. The events started with 150 guests and have grown to bring in thousands every year. [\[source\]](#)

Academic & Institutional Milestones

- **First Doctoral Graduates:** The Annie Taylor Dee School of Nursing celebrated the graduation of its very first cohort of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students, the highest level of nursing degree offered by the university. [\[source\]](#)
- **Stewart Bell Tower:** WSU celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Stewart Bell Tower, which was dedicated on December 14, 1971. [\[source\]](#)

National Recognition

- **Return on Investment:** A 2021 study by Georgetown University ranked Weber State in the top 10% of all U.S. higher education institutions for long-term return on investment (ROI) for its graduates. [\[source\]](#)
- **Cheerleading Titles:** The WSU Spirit Squad won two national championships at the 2021 NCA National Championship, taking first place in both the Advanced Large Coed and the Division I Small Coed categories. [\[source\]](#)

2021: Transition and Recovery

- **Suez Canal Obstruction:** The massive container ship *Ever Given* became wedged across the Suez Canal, one of the world's most vital shipping lanes. The six-day blockage held up an estimated \$9.6 billion worth of trade per day.
- **Vaccine Rollout:** Global efforts to vaccinate billions against COVID-19 became the primary focus of world governments and health organizations.
- **Afghanistan Withdrawal:** The U.S. officially ended its 20-year military presence in Afghanistan, leading to a swift takeover by the Taliban.

2021: The Great Re-emergence

- **TV:** The South Korean thriller *Squid Game* became a global phenomenon, becoming Netflix's most-watched series ever.
- **Music:** Olivia Rodrigo's "Drivers License" launched her to superstardom overnight, and Taylor Swift began her massive project of re-recording her albums with *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*.
- **Film:** *Spider-Man: No Way Home* brought together three generations of fans, proving that movie theaters were back in business.