

Dear Senate Higher Education Committee,

My name is Frank Ticknor and I am a proud former Gopher gymnast, a gymnastics coach, and the father of three young gymnasts with big dreams and a strong work ethic. I am writing to support the public hearing your committee has scheduled for Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 1 pm to hear testimony regarding the three dropped sports at the University of Minnesota. I have been outraged and incensed since the decision to drop these sports was first proposed by Athletic Director Mark Coyle at the 9/11/20 U of M Board of Regents meeting.

The only way to be able to do the skills required to be a big-time Division 1 gymnast is to start very young (5 or 6 years old) and train 5 days a week for 12 or 13 years straight enduring lots of blood, sweat, and tears along the way. It is not for the faint of heart and it requires physical, mental, and spiritual development to stick with it for so long. Imagine you are a young gymnast with the strength, perseverance, and drive to go through these rigors only to learn that your dream of experiencing the exhilaration and joy of being on a men's Division 1 gymnastics team is no longer available. HEARTBREAKING! I was blessed to be on the U of MN Gymnastics team from 1993 to 1997 and in 1995 our team won the Big Ten Title which is the crowning achievement of my athletic career. These amazing experiences will never happen again if we don't do something. I continue to stay involved in gymnastics because this sport has given me so much and I want to give back to the next generation. As a second job, I am a gymnastics coach in the St. Paul area. I coach 22 boys, five days a week including my own two sons who are 14 and 10 (we have a 10 year old daughter who also does gymnastics ). My heart brakes to think that my two boys (or any of the boys I coach) won't have the opportunity to be a Division 1 gymnast at the University of Minnesota. I feel the same way for the track and tennis athletes as well. Taking away opportunities should not be the answer, we are all smart enough to find a solution.

The hearing on February 15 is extremely important to me, please do not cancel it as I have heard that some are trying to get the hearing canceled.

I plan to attend this hybrid hearing (in-person and/or zoom). I am following very closely what comes next, especially any positive movement toward transparency of the use of taxpayer money for higher education and benefits to student athlete programs (specifically the reinstatement of Men's gymnastics, indoor track, and tennis).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Frank Ticknor