

Dear Sirs,

First of all, thank you so much for taking the time to read this email and your willingness to conduct this hearing on the future of Olympic sports at the University of Minnesota.

When I started coaching at the Division I level in 1985 I never dreamed that the athletic landscape would look like it does today.

Somewhere along the way we have lost our way at the NCAA DI level. Instead of well rounded programs where all sports and all student athletes are treated fairly, we are now headed down a road of huge salaries and budgets in football and basketball and fewer and fewer mens and womens Olympic sports. Never did I think I would see the day when the University of Minnesota would succumb to such a model.

My boss from 2002 to 2012 was Joel Maturi, the best boss I ever had in my 4 decades of coaching at all levels from high school to college. He did things the right way. He listened to his coaches, he went to almost every athletic contest and he treated all the men AND women student athletes with dignity and respect. These cuts would never have happened under his watch.

I mention all of this because I hope that your committee will start the process of REALLY listening to the coaches, alums and student athletes at the U and sooner than later restore Minnesota athletics to what it was always intended to be. It needs to go back to the model where all athletes are given a chance to not only succeed on the playing field but also in the classroom and later as alums who take pride in their school and their state and give back not only financially but also culturally.

Division I athletics does not have to be a semi pro model where such a HUGE amount of money is spent on a few "so called" major sports at the expense of three mens sports AND at the same time cutting over 40 womens roster spots from current teams. This was done because the administrators at the U wanted to reduce the number of women cross country runners and rowers. So they cut over 65 men roster spots which put them out of Title IX compliance and then to bring the U back into compliance they cut opportunities for 40 women. It was a shell game used to reduce the total number and men and women olympic sport athletic opportunities by over 100.

My hope is that when you hold your hearing on February 15th, you will take all the facts into account.

This travesty can all be rectified, but it can not be done without the help and support of you and the other legislators in this state. There must be accountability by all involved in this decision. There are solutions to all of this but people need to be willing to really listen and to take action that will allow for all of our sports and student athletes to flourish.

Enough is enough, it is time to bring sanity back to athletics at the University or down the road there may be more cuts and more lost opportunities for the high school boys and girls in this state.

Before I end I want you to know that I understand that DI athletic directors have difficult jobs but the overall integrity of an institution should never be compromised.

We are an education based institution and we must never lose sight of why we are here and that is for the students across all disciplines.

Once again, thank you for your time. It is very much appreciated. I look forward to being at the hearing and listening to what is said.

Gary Wilson, Women's Cross Country and Track and Field Coach, U of M, 1985-2013.

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