

Dear Senator Rarick,

We are writing to encourage the Senate Higher Ed Committee **to hold the 2/15 hearing about the University of Minnesota decision to permanently eliminate 3 men's teams** – gymnastics, tennis, and track & field, a team that our two kids [Owen](#) and [Eli](#) currently compete on (which we have heard the University is lobbying to have canceled).

We believe that there is much to be learned from examining the decision and, perhaps more importantly, the University's future plans for athletics. We understand that collegiate athletics have changed and that the entire model is broken, with an arms-race mentality to bolster football and basketball programs in hopes that its revenue will cover expenses for the rest of the sports. Olympic and other non-revenue sports – the majority of student athlete opportunities - have suffered greatly in recent years as a result. We are also concerned that when we raised concerns with President Gabel, we were mostly ignored. The single response we received from her office told us we should “trust what the athletic department was telling us” – when what we were asking her/them to do is provide much needed attention and oversight.

Here are some things we think would be good next steps:

- Review how the decision to cut the men's teams was made – we were particularly appalled that the decision came right AFTER we paid tuition for our two kids, leaving us very limited options to consider alternatives
- Request a public sharing of future plans for athletics at the University of Minnesota.
- Ask President Gabel to directly engage and provide oversight on athletics.
- Ask the University to engage in a process of statewide engagement and input about athletics, consistent with its land grant status.
- Review how peer institutions such as the Universities of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio State navigated the pandemic without cutting programs.
- Encourage the University to find innovative ways to build self-funding models in non-revenue sports, engaging with stakeholders and supporters.

If appropriate, we would like the Minnesota Legislature to consider tying state funding to the University's ability to be more transparent and accountable, even on athletics. Sports is often the “front porch” of a university – a place where many have their first interaction. It seems troubling that the University of Minnesota is not interested in solutions that are in hand for all of the cut programs to operate with outside funding and support. We would have thought that they would be interested in solutions to keep opportunities for the ones that our kids have benefitted from. Perhaps a hearing would help encourage them to do so.

Thank you, and please let us know if we can provide additional information at any point.

Best,

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