

Jeff & Julie Streit
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February 14, 2022

Dear Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

My husband and I are both alumni of the U of M–Twin Cities and life-long residents of Minnesota. Our son, Austin, is currently the 5th generation in my family to attend the U. He is also a member of the Men's Track & Field and Cross Country teams. We were extremely disheartened and unhappy when the Regents voted to cut the Men's Indoor Track & Field program, along with Men's Gymnastics and Tennis.

The primary reasons given by Athletic Director Mark Coyle to cut these programs were misleading and short-sighted. This approach did not reflect the values we as Minnesotans, alumni, students, and benefactors expect from the University. The lack of transparency was disconcerting and disappointing!

- Title IX was used as an excuse for the cuts. Our high school senior daughter, Hadley, will be a walk-on member of the Women's Track & Field Program at the U next year. While we sincerely appreciate the importance of Title IX, Mark Coyle did not communicate that the cuts to the men's programs would also result in cutting about 40 women's spots on the Track & Field team – to maintain Title IX compliance! Cut men so you have to cut women – this is not what the Title IX authors had in mind! Mark Coyle used the threat of Title IX non-compliance as a scare tactic to influence the Regents to cut men's programs. We feel badly for the women who did nothing wrong and were forced to give up their Gopher dreams. We don't even want to think about how hurt and angry we would have felt if our daughter lost her hard-earned spot under the guise of Title IX compliance!
- The Covid pandemic was only a few months old when the Regents voted, and the financial uncertainty for the Athletic Department was understandably substantial. Their estimate was up to \$75MM. That said, it was way too soon to understand the extent of the Covid impact. Mark Coyle took advantage of the Covid uncertainty and used fear to influence the Regents to cut men's programs. The loss ended up being a little over \$20MM. This is not a small amount, but the Men's Indoor Track & Field Program costs only \$110K per year. And Mark Coyle was well aware that the Track & Field alumni had already secured pledges of \$1.8MM (to start with) from program alumni, friends, and families (including ours) to continue funding the program.

Cutting the Men's Indoor Track & Field program did not make sense then, and it certainly doesn't now. Let's use the value of hindsight to fix this. The Athletic Department and Regents may think this train has left the station, but it's not too late to do the right thing!

Please help us restore the Men's Indoor Track & Field program as soon as possible!

Thank you for your time,

Jeff & Julie Streit