

Senators:

My name is Kelly Griffiths and I reside in Eagan. I was a three-time letter winner in Men's Cross Country and Men's Track and Field from 1984-89. More recently, I was President of the M Club Board of Directors and have donated to the Roy Griak fund monthly for approximately the last 20 years. I am writing to ask that you hold hearings and eventually vote to reinstate Men's indoor track and field, gymnastics and tennis. I do not think that the elimination of these sports saved the University of Minnesota significant dollars and the elimination of these sports does not further Women's participation in Sports, the clear purpose of Title IX. (I point out that Men's Gymnastics had a long term feasibility plan for self-funding and that Coyle refused an tennis alumni's endowment offer of \$20,000,000 to maintain the men's tennis program). Attached is the correspondence I sent to the Board of Regents when Athletic Director Coyle made the decision to eliminate the University of Minnesota Men's Track team. I think the only reasonable explanation for the decision to eliminate these three non-revenue sports is that Coyle has a long term plan to cut more non-revenue sports in the future and whittle the athletic program down to the minimum number of sports allowed under NCAA rules to maintain a Division 1 program in order to maximize revenue in the Athletic Department. This is the antithesis of college amateur athletics.

Last, and this is a point I did not make in the attached correspondence, I believe the elimination of Men's Track and Field, specifically, was the elimination of the only non-revenue sport at the University of MN that has a high racially diverse participation rate. One of the claimed commitments of the Gopher Athletics Department is to **champion diversity and inclusion**. To ensure that Gopher Athletics is living up to the commitment to champion diversity and inclusion, it formed the **Diversity and Inclusion Committee**. The committee began initial work in 2017 to create a comprehensive Four-Year Plan for 2019-2023. Did this four year plan include eliminating the most racially diverse non-revenue sport at the University of MN? Or is the purpose of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to provide lip service to diversity goals in order to deflect criticism of the department in that regard?

When you look at the racial makeup of teams in the NCAA and in the Big Ten you really only have Black student athletes in three sports, to a large degree: football, basketball, and track. After that the numbers drop off pretty significantly. In eliminating Track and Field while maintaining other sports (swimming, diving, baseball, wrestling, hockey, golf) you are taking away one of the few sports that offers admission opportunities to a large swath of racially diverse people, and protecting the sports that cater to a very specific racial and class demographic (overwhelmingly white and more affluent). My argument isn't that other non-revenue sports should be eliminated, but that you should not be eliminating track if diversity is a commitment at the University of Minnesota. In high school, track is typically the most accessible sport, the cheapest sport, and the sport with the greatest participation. Effectively the University of Minnesota is using the football and basketball players (sports with an overrepresentation of black athletes) to support the rest of the non-revenue sports (a predominately white demographic) and they are eliminating the most racially diverse non-revenue sport, track and field. If diversity is important to the University of Minnesota, it shouldn't eliminate the one sport where you have a higher representation of Black athletes who are not revenue-generating. With the elimination of track and field, you are effectively subsidizing non-revenue sports that cater mostly to a white demographic via money-making sports, which have an overrepresentation of Black athletes. (This is not to mention the fact that in football, you have a bunch of mostly white people paying to watch mostly Black athletes beat the hell out of each other while at the same time, the University of Minnesota knows the effects of CTE on these athletes). I believe the University of Minnesota should promote the one racially diverse non-revenue and safe sport that is available, track and field.

Thank you.

KELLY GRIFFITTS