

Dear Senators, My name is Rob Brown and I had the great fortune of attending the University of Minnesota, mid 80's, on a full ride scholarship for men's gymnastics. It is one of the greatest highlights of my life. I became a young man in the gym at Cook Hall and learned many life lessons pursuing my passion and trying to win Big Ten, NCAA and National Team Honors. I would consider myself a tremendous ambassador, until recently, for the University and a prime example of who the University would want to be affiliated with.

What is the mission statement for the University and the athletic program? We have to start there and then move forward. If it is to make money, have over paid staff and produce mediocre results then congratulations, what a success. I want nothing to do with it. I understand we have to make money, I'm a full-fledged capitalist, but how we spend it is where the mission statement becomes relevant. The men's gymnastics facility at Cook Hall was subpar when I was there 39 years ago and a joke between my time and now. Yet, haven't fact checked, men's gymnastics is probably one of the winningest programs, highest GPA programs and the producers of some of the greatest young men the University could parade in front of the world and proudly say these are University of Minnesota grads. They cancel the program to save fractions of the budget, yet the results have been priceless. Again, I ask what is the mission statement?

I bring up the facility at Cook Hall as a reminder, and proof, that success has very little to do with facility. Yes, you need modern and safe but over the top locker rooms, Taj mahal stadiums and endless facilities to attract the "best" is an empty vessel. Men's gymnastics, for over 100 years, proved that character, the true gage of winning, has nothing to do with the nonsense that universities focus on now. Character is what I want my own kids to have and learn through sports and academics. Not "if I get a \$500 bat my hitting will get better" or "I'll go to this school because the football team gets a new uniform every game". I know you can relate as parents and having tried getting new golf clubs thinking your game was going to get better without doing the work.

In summation I want to apologize for not being as articulate as I need to be to convey my passion for not only gymnastics, my experiences but for all these lost opportunities going forward. There is enough money to not only keep programs but expand then for women and new sports going forward. There is a lack of leadership, conviction and creativity in thinking that is at fault. Heads up, you better take a look ahead because it's going to get worse, unless a new course is taken, and it will be the demise of many more opportunities not only for men but for women.

Thanks for your time. Robert Brown