

Senate Hearing Statement from Shane Wiskus

February 11, 2022

Imagine you are a 17-year-old kid starting a 4-year countdown to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. It is a dream you've had since you were 10 years old, and your first "Quad" is beginning. You sign your National Letter of Intent to go to the University of Minnesota and join their Men's Gymnastics Team, a program that you believe will help you achieve your ultimate dream of making an Olympic Team. In your first year at the school, you and your team end the season with a historic runner-up performance at the 2018 NCAA Championships. The following year, The Gopher Gymnastics Team made history again, winning the inaugural Big 10 Regular Season Championship. Everything is going to plan, the 2020 season is about to be your best yet, then chaos. The entire world goes into lockdown, the season is canceled, the Olympics are postponed, and your beloved college gymnastics team is cut.



The decision to cut the Minnesota Men's Gymnastics team was one of the most impactful events of my life up to this point. It forced me to leave my team, my family, and my home to train at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. This decision was not taken lightly, and it threw a substantial amount of additional variables into the equation of making an Olympic Team. I had to uproot my life and move away from Minnesota for the first time in my life, start a new training program with new coaches, teammates, and all while maintaining my status as a student at the U of M. Although this story had a happy ending that resulted in my ultimate dream coming true, the pain of losing the program will remain for years to come. I don't get to watch my Gopher Gymnastics team continue to make history at the NCAA level. I don't get to see my underclassmen improve year to year and grow into the new leaders of the team. I don't get to show my love and support for the program that made me who I am today.

For me, this program gave me a place where I could grow not only as a gymnast but as an individual. It became my home away from home, my second family, and a space that helped me transition into adulthood. With the continued efforts from people whose lives were touched by this program, I hope one day we can see Gopher Men's Gymnastics back on the NCAA stage. Who knows, my dreams came true once before, why can't it happen again?



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane Wiskus".

Shane Wiskus

