

Summary of Feedback Received Regarding the Report of the Athletics Review Committee, April - May 2011

Summarized in the pages that follow is feedback that was received by the Athletics Review Committee in April and May of 2011. All individual documents, petitions, presentations, proposals, letters and email messages received were transmitted to President Simmons.

I. Athletics Review Committee: Summary of Meetings with Individual Teams

Meetings with Wrestling, Fencing, and Skiing Teams: April 27, 2011

At individual meetings, representatives of the Wrestling, Fencing, and Skiing programs included students, alumni, faculty, and other supporters. The students played a major role in presenting the case for their teams, and the presentations were uniformly thoughtful and demonstrated the commitment of those presenters to their teams.

A brief summary of major points from each of the meetings follows.

1. Wrestling team

Four current team members were joined by Governor Chafee '75, Coach David Amato, Professor Kenneth Miller '70, and alumni Bob Hill '88, Serge Bruner '71, and Jill Sullivan '89.

Major points:

- A. Wrestling team members bring diversity to the campus; we will lose valuable additions to our student body without this program
- B. Team members are good students and concentrate in a variety of different areas
- C. Wrestling does not cost the university much money to operate
- D. Strong community at Brown with 100 years of history
- E. Wrestling alumni and parents are willing to work with Brown on a plan to continue to support the team; they prefer to take a positive approach as long as we are willing to consider the possibility of preserving wrestling
- F. Concern that the commitment of donors over the years is being disrespected with this recommendation to discontinue the program
- G. Disadvantage to Brown to have fewer student athletes

Supporting documents: petition to save all three programs, letters from each member of the wrestling team advocating for the value of the team to Brown

2. Fencing team

Five current team members were joined by Coach Atilio Tass, Professors Diane Lipscomb P'14, Leigh Hochberg '90, and Peter Weiss P'11 P'15.

Major points:

- A. 115 years of Fencing team history at Brown
- B. Fencers compete at a high level
- C. Fencers are very successful students with a diverse representation of concentrations
- D. Fencing team does not need recruiting slots; walk-on participation works for Fencing team
- E. Fencing alumni and parents can raise the money to support the team including coaching and facility costs; current commitments could support the team for 5 years and within 3-4 years, could raise an endowment
- F. The relationship of the men's and women's teams is excellent, with men and women practicing and competing together on a regular basis.
- G. The program is very efficient in terms of sharing coaches and other resources and serves as a model of gender equity.

Supporting documents: power point presentation on fundraising plan and goals, petition, letters

3. Skiing Team (Women's Varsity and Men's Club representation)

Three current members of the Women's Varsity team and one representative of the Men's Club team were joined by alumnus Chris Henderson '01 and Coach Michael LeBlanc.

Major points:

- A. Growing roster of women on the varsity team
- B. Skiing program is very competitive
- C. Skiers are successful students with a wide range of concentrations and extra-curricular activities
- D. Strong community experience, and the relationship to the men's club team is excellent and mutually supportive
- E. Season is most active while Brown on break in January; only a few regular season competitions occur during the spring semester (only a few weeks in February)
- F. Ski Team has piloted a practice facility in Canton MA, Blue Hills, that is approximately 30 miles from campus and reduces the travel for practice, which was a concern of the Athletics Review Committee that is improved with this change; they do not impact Brown facilities
- G. Ski Team has been invited to join EISA conference which provides a more competitive and less expensive opportunity for competition; this invitation is a recognition of the team's success

Supporting documents: letter from Harvard coach, budget sheet, key facts and figures about the team

II. Athletics Review Committee: Summary of Meetings in April and May 2011

Faculty Executive Committee: April 26, 2011

FEC received the report in advance and had an opportunity to ask questions.

Discussion included:

- Investment in Athletics – questions about how this investment fits with other institutional priorities, specifically emphasizing the large number of academic needs that compete with this priority; appropriate to fund Athletics at an adequate level, but it should not be better supported than other areas of the university including academic departments
- Impact of team reductions – impact in losing some students who might come to Brown for these teams, concern about support for affected students
- Admission slots – questions about current policies and admission practices
- Financial Aid – goal of this recommendation and how it is managed, current policy and practice in attracting top students and following Ivy League regulations

Brown University Community Council Meeting: April 26, 2011

Council heard a presentation on the charge and recommendations.

Major discussion points included:

- Timing of the recommendations – concern about effect on students and coaches in implementing team reductions so quickly, concern about lack of time for input on recommendations
- Competitiveness – questions about how the Athletics Review Committee evaluated the competitiveness of the teams and how competitiveness will be strengthened through these recommendations
- Decisions about individual teams – requests for more data on the decisions to eliminate teams
- Options – comments about whether there are other ways to strengthen the Athletics program rather than accepting this set of recommendations, e.g. fundraising
- Impact of these recommendations – concern about divisiveness among teams, concern about impact on affected students at the end of the semester, questions about support for affected students and incoming students and coaches
- Club sports – can teams recommended for elimination become clubs, questions about why this report did not address club teams, how will elevation of one club team be managed
- Walk-on participation – admission slots reduction will increase walk-on participation and some teams can manage, concern about broad impact of reduction in admission slots

Undergraduate Council of Students: April 27, 2011

UCS had a presentation of the charge and recommendations, followed by an hour of discussion.

Major discussion points included:

- Timing of the community discussion of the recommendations - concern that report discussion at the end of the semester was providing a short timeframe for input, affected students are disrupting their studies at critical time, implementation leaves many students with few options

- Admission slots – questions about why the need to reduce admission slots, concern about the impact on teams’ ability to compete, implication for value of student athletes and diversity of student body
- Strengthening the department – questions about whether these recommendations propose enough change to accomplish the goal of strengthening the department: do changes need to be more substantial? Did the committee consider more cuts? Is this too much pain for not enough gain?
- Title IX – how was Title IX a factor in formulating the recommendations and how will we comply if these recommendations are implemented, did Title IX have an unfair impact on team decisions, particularly wrestling?
- Data – request for data used to be released, discussion of data committee accessed from Human Resources, Athletics, Office of the Dean of the College, Admission and Financial Aid, availability of data through U.S. Department of Education (EADA)
- Saving the teams – concern about decreasing opportunity in favor of competitiveness, conflict for athletes to save teams at busy time in the semester, will cuts have positive impact on department, reducing teams breaking trust with students, fundraising should be an option if these recommendations are driven by budget

Advisory Council on Athletics: April 29, 2011

A letter from the Council representing their response to the report and recommendations is being transmitted separately to President Simmons.

Brown University Sports Foundation: April 30, 2011

A letter from BUSF members representing their response to the report and recommendations is being transmitted separately to President Simmons.

Student Athlete Advisory Council: May 1, 2011

Meeting started with announcement of suspension of consideration of team reductions.

Major discussion points included:

- Admission slots – impact on teams, implication of devaluing student athletes, impact on academic index, implementation plan (which teams would be affected and how will those decisions be made), fit with goals of review (will this really strengthen the department?), academic depth and campus contributions of student athletes, concern about recruited athletes who leave teams but use a slot, our standing with peer schools if we reduce slots
- Team reductions – what data were used in reviewing the teams, fairness of decisions, support for affected coaches and students, consideration of facility needs
- Title IX – how did it affect the decisions, what is the recommendation to elevate one women’s team and how will that decision be managed
- Financial Aid – questioning impact of recommended increase to Financial Aid
- Process – how will team reduction process be handled going forward, fundraising potential, collecting input as part of report and for discussion in the fall, impact of suspension of discussion on the future of teams

III. Overview of email feedback received by the Athletics Review Committee and the Committee Chair

May 9, 2011

In response to the report and recommendations issued April 21, 2011, there are to date more than 200 emails sent to the Athletics Review Committee at athleticsreview@brown.edu, and as many or more emails sent to individual members of the committee.

Many of the emails speak specifically in support of one team, with support of the program based on the important role that the sport and program played in the writer's own development or experience as a Brown student or that of their children or other family members. A number of emails focus also on one program but are specifically in disagreement with the outcome and interpretation of the evaluative criteria expressed in the report.

There were also writers, fewer in number than those who wrote in support of the teams, who believed the report had taken on a difficult subject well and who supported the recommendations, while also recognizing the distress that eliminating teams caused.

The numbers of emails from each group of supporters is indicative not of the value of the sport or of the experience of students in that sport, but of the alumni and friends organizations in their response to the report recommendations.

Major points and themes presented are as follows:

1. Breadth of program scope: Those writing in disagreement with a recommendation to cut any sports cited the value to be found in providing athletic opportunity to as many students as possible.
2. Delay closing specific programs: A number of writers urged Brown to provide at least one more season – to allow rising seniors to complete their athletic as well as academic career, and to accommodate incoming first-year students. Some writers saw this approach as more humane than abruptly closing the program.
3. Athletics contributes to diversity: Many emails addressed the diversity of Brown and the ways in which these four teams contribute to the diversity – of people and of experience – at Brown.
4. Access to Brown University: Wrestling supporters specifically spoke of the important avenue that wrestling provides high school students for educational opportunity at institutions such as Brown, as well as the positive and inspirational message provided by current students and alumni in their work with younger athletes.
5. Teams are competitive: Many writers responded with respect to the evaluative criterion “competitiveness” which they defined as wins or personal or team finishes, citing many wins and placement finishes for the teams.
6. Value of Brown teams to divisional and national competition: In addition to commenting on how well the athletes have represented Brown – personally, athletically, and as models of highly-performing students and athletes – during their respective

competitions, several writers described the national scene in each of the sports as “close” or “tight-knit,” and indicated that the Brown team plays an important role in their sport’s competitive environment.

7. Perseverance and overcoming adversity: Many, many writers described the critical role their sport played in the development of personal ability to persevere in the face of adversity, as well as the importance of that skill throughout life.
8. Potential for teams to fundraise to support their programs: Numerous writers asked that teams be allowed to raise sufficient funds to maintain the team, made proposals to do so, reported on previous efforts, and generally supported the belief that sufficient funds could be raised to support the team(s) adequately.
9. Elimination of opportunity is counter to what Brown stands for: Another theme in the responses is that dropping sports in itself is not consistent with Brown’s approach to providing opportunity, choice and breadth in its programs.
10. Title IX: A number of writers argued that we should not let Title IX dictate what programs we do and don't offer. Others argued that we should not discontinue teams that were explicitly added as part of the 1998 Joint Agreement.
11. Elimination of teams while also proposing addition: Many people questioned why we would eliminate existing women's teams (fencing and skiing) while also elevating a different team to varsity status, rather than keeping the women's teams already in existence.
12. Conflict of interest: A number of people questioned whether any individual connected with the existing athletics program could be truly objective about which programs should be continued and which should be discontinued.