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Senate

State of Minnesota

August 23, 2021

Dear Chair Ken Powell and the Members of the Board of Regents, President Joan Gabel, and Athletic Director Mark Coyle,

First, we want to congratulate you on the success Minnesota athletes have had at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. We are particularly thrilled to witness Sunisa Lee, gold medal recipient in all around, Grace McCallum as silver team medalist and Shane Wiskus who finished fifth in team finals. We are also pleased that investments in youth athletics programs across the state have provided generations with health and developmental benefits while allowing those with the dedication and ability to reach the highest level of international success. These athletes' accomplishments make this a great time to discuss the purpose and effect of intercollegiate athletics at our flagship public land-grant institution, the University of Minnesota.

Many people are still surprised by last year's announced termination of several non-revenue sports at the University. We respect the enormous challenge of balancing budgets, even in normal times and we stand in partnership to overcome these times. Yet, as we have witnessed on the world stage, these programs have served a purpose beyond any financial returns. It has also been recently known that the cost savings are potentially lower, requiring less in the form of an athletics loan or a deficit incurred by the University.

Recognizing how the sports at issue require revenue generated by other sports, we note how the University's general budget has supported athletics, a general budget that includes funding provided by the partnership with the Legislature. We believe state funding has been well used as these sports have provided countless young athletes a chance to pursue and excel in athletics and the opportunity for nontraditional students of low income families. It has also provided a path to the world-class education provided by the University.

Although a small percentage of athletes make it to Division I competition, the existence of the programs serves as an aspirational beacon for youth from a very early age. For kids in the sports to be discontinued at the University, such as gymnastics, those hopes will no longer be reached in Minnesota.

These past weeks have shown the impact of the University's non-revenue sports is undeniable. The success of athletes in Gymnastics and Track & Field in reaching and competing at the Olympics is a great reminder of the significant value provided by two of the sports to be discontinued.

We recognize that financial losses stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in institutions across the country announcing they would be cutting sports to balance their budgets. We've been hopeful the financial recovery, with support from the federal government, would lead to a reinstatement of those programs at the University as many schools across the country have reinstated sports previously scheduled to be cut.

As legislators, we keenly recognize the complexity of running the University of Minnesota. We don't take weighing in on specific University matters lightly, and we're encouraged by the current administration's emphasis on strategic planning and leadership in research. Recognizing the substantial annual investment the Legislature makes in the University, we believe the sports slated to be discontinued represent a valuable and worthwhile investment by our flagship public land-grant university. We urge University of Minnesota leadership



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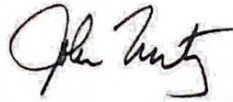


to reconsider reinstating the three remaining programs scheduled for elimination and look forward to meeting to discuss further how we can support the University in a potential supplemental budget next legislative session.

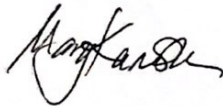
Sincerely,



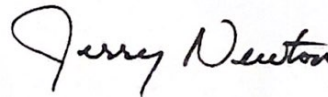
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Senate District 49



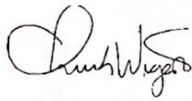
Senator John Marty
Senate District 66



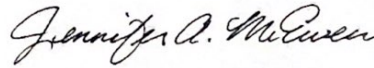
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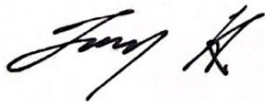
Senator Jennifer A. McEwen
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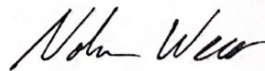
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