

To President Paxson and Samuel M. Mencoff

06/03/2020

Cc Jack Hayes, Robin Harris

We write to express our shock, dismay, anger and deep concern for Brown University's decision to discontinue its Men's Cross Country and Track and Field programs along with eight other Varsity teams. The elimination of a program so rich in history and tradition has wide ranging implications, most important of which is the loss of opportunity for a demographically diverse group of students. For that loss, we are profoundly disappointed. Beyond the male student athletes, many of whom have had their athletic careers suddenly and prematurely ripped away from them, the decision has a profound impact on the remaining female student-athletes who have lost roughly half of their teammates. To be clear, as Ivy League track and cross country coaches, we strongly believe the combined Ivy programs are really one team (men and women). Additionally, this has a momentous effect on the future of cross country and track and field in the Ivy League.

The Ivy League Cross Country and Track and Field experience is unique in the world of college athletics. There is a collegiality and respect amongst all athletes in the league, developed by the shared experience of knowing that our competitors are on an equal playing field. By eliminating the men's varsity status, the women's program at Brown will essentially be gutted, forever unbalancing that playing field. All our programs have benefited disproportionately from the generosity of our male alumni donations. Additionally, the remaining programs in the League will now have the competitive advantage over Brown due to our coaching staff makeup. Leaving Brown with three paid coaches compared to the rest of us with six, leaves the Brown program with reduced capacity and expertise to instruct all event types.

Brown Cross Country and Track and Field was the first in the league with a combined gender model. Since 1983, the men and women have trained together, traveled together, the captains led together and when it comes to competition, they celebrated wins and suffered losses together. There is no practical distinction between the men's and women's team when it comes to day to day operations. This is a unique situation in sport where men and women partner together as co-equals. Combined gender programs (as are six of seven league schools other than Brown) provide numerous educational opportunities for growth as students and athletes in ways not afforded in other sports. There is no doubt the women's program will suffer greatly with the loss of the men and the removal of the men's program will certainly be deleterious to future generations of the remaining Brown program.

On our campuses, track and field is a vehicle of opportunity for an incredibly diverse population. There are over 16,000 high school track and field programs in the nation and each year, Ivy League track and field offers the chance of an elite education to a demographic that might not ordinarily have that opportunity. Brown Track and Field has historically carried a roster that reflects that diversity and ultimately adds not just to the experience of the student-athletes themselves, but of their teammates and the university at large. It is concerning then, that Brown

University, which has always been among the most diverse rosters in the League, has decided to eliminate a sport which by its nature, provides such opportunity.

Over the past few decades, Ivy League Cross Country and Track and Field programs have consistently improved and are now a major factor on the national scene. The elimination of the Brown Men's program is likely to have repercussions that will affect the entire league's viability on the national scene. There has always existed a stability in the history and tradition of our league. Brown's decision has created great uncertainty, and that in turn affects our current teams and those recruits looking to further their education in the Ivy League. And with 8 (and now 7) teams, the Ivy League is already the smallest NCAA Division 1 conference in the nation that contests championships in all three sports. Losing one team drastically affects the conduct of our championship and the legitimacy of our league amongst our peers. We have lost a rival in the most traditional laden competitions in the nation.

We also write to express our regret if our coaching body's decision in 2009 to eliminate Brown from our Championship rotation played any role in this decision. We emphatically and unanimously would support adding Brown back to our rotation if that will help restore the program.

Finally, the message in the elimination of Brown Men's Cross Country and Track and Field is counter to every core value of the Ivy League, where each university's mission is education through athletics. The premise of this decision seems to be that by eliminating opportunity for some, opportunity for others will improve. That premise sends a message that is contrary to Brown Athletics' own mission statement.

*"The athletic program plays an essential role in teaching students to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, make sacrifices, strive for excellence, persevere through adversity, and compete with dignity and pride while developing a commitment to teamwork and service to the community."*

As directors and head coaches in the Ivy League it is our sincere hope that you will reinstate the Brown Men's Cross Country and Track and Field programs with immediate effect.

Sincerely,

*Dan Ireland*, the Director of Cross Country and Track & Field at Columbia

*Mike Henderson*, the Alan B. '53 and Elizabeth Heekin Harris Head Coach of Women's Track & Field/Men's and Women's Cross Country at Cornell

*Barry Harwick*, the Herbert & Marjorie Chase Director of Dartmouth Track & Field and Cross Country

*Courtney Jaworski*, Head Coach of Dartmouth Women's Cross Country

*Jason Saretsky*, the William W. "Bill" McCurdy Director of Track & Field/Cross Country at Harvard

*Alex Gibby*, Associate Head Coach Cross Country at Harvard

*Steve Dolan*, the James P. Tuppeny/Betty J. Costanza Director of Track & Field/Cross Country at Penn

*Michelle Eisenreich*, the Director of Women's Track & Field and Cross Country at Princeton

*Brad Hunt*, Head Coach Women's Cross Country at Princeton

*Fred Samara*, the William M. Weaver Jr. '34 Head Coach of Men's Track & Field at Princeton

*Jason Vigilante*, Head Coach Men's Cross Country at Princeton

*David Shoehalter*, the Mark T. Young Director of Track & Field at Yale

*Paul Harkins*, Head Coach Yale Men's Cross Country at Yale

*Taryn Sheehan*, Head Coach Women's Cross Country at Yale